

“Providing and Opportunity for Children to Play and Learn”



**A Coaching Manual for U5 and U6 Soccer Coaches
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Importance of Organized Sports

It is often said “the work of a child is play”. Our children play less outside today than any generation before. Technological advances give our children many advantages and opportunities we did not have. But these magnificent learning opportunities are spent inside and at the expense of unstructured play outside.

We as children and children before us spent countless hours outside playing games of our own devising. Practically every middle class child of our generation remembers how they were called home for dinner. This call was usually too early for us and we were in disbelief that the time went so fast. Generations before spent vast amounts of time in a state of mind referred to as “flow”. Flow is a period of time when the mind is so engaged on an activity that hours seem like minutes. Children today most often experience the state of “flow” during computer games.

Children lose the experience of outside play and the learning opportunities more today than ever before. Children today do not climb trees, create games, and explore at the rate we did as children. Every time we climbed a tree, we made decisions on safety vs risk, we solved problems, and at times worked with other children to help and support each other. When creating games, children must be inventive and place degrees of structure in their unstructured world. Children

were forced to be fair or suffer the consequences and they were forced to problem solve on a continual basis.

Factors that prohibit unstructured play include technological advances, changing demographics, and safety. Most likely our children do not have a group of natural playmates in their neighborhood. Houses today are on larger pieces of property and there are fewer places where families naturally cluster. Parents now must schedule play days where before they were a habit of the neighborhood. Parents must also be cautious due to safety concerns. It is no longer perceived to be safe to allow children to play unsupervised. Children also suffer from our more litigious society. Parents at times make risk management decisions at the expense of allowing children to be children.

At this same time, most school systems are cutting the physical education budgets. Children do not have the same opportunities in gym class that we grew up with. The children spend less time in physical education class. The equipment in most physical education classes is outdated and wanting.

Children simply do not have the same opportunities to play, structured and non-structured, in a physical manner as before. As a result, children lose opportunities to make decisions, problem solve, resolve conflict, recognize others perspective and a host of other life learning qualities. Research has proven that being outside has a calming effect on children, increases the senses, and

promotes physical fitness. Today prisoners spend more time outside than some children. Outside play is good for children's health and overall development. Children's decrease in physical activity has contributed to an increase in childhood obesity. Children who enjoy physical activity while growing up are more likely to stay physically active as adults.

Soccer's Role

Youth sports are a viable avenue to put play back in children's lives. The key to children getting the most from the experience in a structured youth sport is to make sure age appropriate programs and activities are presented in a safe, child friendly manner. Soccer as a sport offers children a great alternative to their diminished play opportunities for many reasons. These reasons include:

1. Child friendly sport.
2. Easy to initiate.
3. Low number of children needed.
4. Once game begins the adults role is limited.
5. Problem solving occurs.
6. Decision making occurs.
7. Aerobic and anaerobic exercise occurs.
8. Players can take game home
9. Increase use of body parts.
10. Age appropriate activities for overall cognitive, social and physical development possible for all ages.

Soccer and other organized sports did not need to offer programs to U5 and U6 children before. But with the changes of the last two decades, organized sports and soccer in particular fill a void that allows children to continue natural development through play.

Organized soccer programs serve a positive role in the overall development of children. Creating a safe place for children to play alone is a need in today's society. Soccer also offers many additional benefits not offered in other organized child activities. The game of soccer gives each child a dynamic

activity with continuous action. Each child can participate and maximum benefit from each day's participation as long as the coach/facilitator plans age appropriate activities and allows each player to participate to the full extent. Elimination games need to be eliminated.

Soccer offers children the best opportunity to participate in a team sport when compared to other team sports. Other team sports do not meet the needs of the children when large motor skills, the children's attention span, and financial commitments are considered.

The parent coach should be commended for taking the commitment to volunteer. This is a tremendous responsibility in today's society. The coach serves as a facilitator, teacher, and role model. As a facilitator the coach must recognize the "work of a child is play", and your role is to facilitate safe play with age appropriate activities. Time on task is critical; the participants should play the majority of each meeting. Long instructions and lectures are not needed and get in the way of the children's play. Transitions between activities should be short in nature and smooth. The role of a teacher also is an important role for the coach to fill. The players will need to learn and progress with the game of soccer. Do not confuse this with teaching rules. We are teaching some soccer behavior at this age and at times skills. Being a good role model is the most important role of the coach for U5 and U6 players. The players take a notice of the coach's behavior before, during, and after each meeting. Male coaches

possibly have an additional responsibility concerning the coach as a role model. Many children grow up without a male role model in the home. We all know that the overwhelming majority preschool, kindergarten teachers and day care providers are female. You can be the first male role model to a child.

Volunteering to coach is a great commitment and serves all the children you will work with in an important step in their development towards adulthood. The Soccer Association of Columbia/HC will support and help in every stage. The reminder of this coaching manual will prepare you to take on this challenge.

Characteristics of U6 Soccer Players

Psychomotor Development

Psychomotor-of or pertaining to a response involving both motor and psychological components.

- Movement Education Approach
- Body segments grow at different rates
- Differences for boys and girls are minimal
- Weight range for boys and girls is approximately 30-50lbs
- Height range for boys approximately 35-45", girls approximately 37-45"
- Progress in motor development starts with the head and moves downward to the feet and from the center of the body outward.
- Easy fatigue, rapid recovery, heart rate around 90bpm for boys and girls
- Emphasis on fundamental movement skills
- Increased use of all body parts
- Need to explore qualities of rolling and bouncing ball

Cognitive Development

Cognitive-of or pertaining to the mental processes of perception, memory, judgment, and reasoning as contrasted with emotional and volitional processes.

- Preoperational stage of cognitive development (Piaget)
- Play consists of high degree of imagination and pretend activities
- Beginning to use symbols to represent objects in environment
- Tend to only one task at a time in problem solving situations
- Process small bits of information at a time, long sequential instructions are not processed
- Able to understand simple rules
- Immature understanding of time and space relations

Psychosocial Development

Psychosocial-of or pertaining to interaction between social and psychological factors.

- Development of self-concept, body awareness, self image through movement
- Egocentric, see world only from their perspective, demonstrates through parallel play
- Need generous praise, play without pressure
- Influential person in their life is most likely their mother or significant parent
- May verbalize team, but does not understand group or collective play

Principles of Youth Coaching

- **Developmentally Appropriate-** All activities and coaching manners need to fit the cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial characteristics of the player you are coaching.
- **Clear, concise, and correct information-** Information needs to be given to children in sizes that fit their attention span. The players come to soccer events to have fun, not listen to adults ramble.
- **Simple to complex-** Every soccer experience should have a natural progression that begins with the first state of development and progresses with more activities that are more demanding. It is suggested that session with U5 and U6 players begin with an activity that does not involve the ball. The saying a player must be able to control their body before they can control the ball will develop players that can control a game.
- **Safe and appropriate training area-** The players training area must be free of hazards that can include broken glass, holes in the surface, standing water, and large rocks.
- **Decision making-** As soccer is a game of fluid changes, practices, training sessions, and games must reflect the demand of the game in regards to decision making. Activities need to be structured to allow for the players to make decisions.
- **Implications for the game-** All activities must have a relevance to the demands of the game.

Small Sided Play

The reason U5 and U6 soccer players play a smaller game than young adults and adults is the full sided game of 11v11 was developed by adults for adults. The characteristics of U5 and U6 soccer players show us the children are selfish by nature at this stage in their development. The adult eyes see a 3v3 or 4v4 game with teams designated by color. The child's eyes often see 5 to 7 players inhibiting their chance to play with the toy (ball). By making the game smaller we have allowed for more chances for success.

The 3v3/4v4 game:

- Allows players to frequently touch the one toy on the field; the ball.
- Presents many opportunities to score goals.
- Encourages and permits regaining possession of the ball.
- Maximizes active participation while minimizing inactivity and boredom.
- Provides an age appropriate organization to the playing environment.
- Reflects the philosophy of player development expressed in state and national coaching schools as well the philosophy of the overwhelming majority of the world.
- Eliminates complicated rules, and allows children to play while relegating the role of adults to a facilitator of fun.
- Allows the game to be the teacher.

Reducing the number of players to 3 and 4 players per team allows for all of the components that are present in the adult game.

- The ball
- Teammates and opponents
- Appropriate space
- Guidelines
- Direction of play
- The combination of length and width

Small Sided Play develops:

- Skill that is realistic to the game of soccer.
- Motor ability; balance, agility and coordination.
- Perception, insight, and awareness.
- Vision.
- Problem solving: choices and decisions.
- Physical fitness.

Learning by discovery, trial and error: playing!

Basic rules for the 3v3 and 4v4 game

Part of the effectiveness of modifying the game to small sided play is also modifying the rules. These rule changes contribute to small sided play meeting the needs of the U5 and U6 player. The adult version of soccer includes adult oriented rules that provide playing guidelines suitable for adult understanding, behavior, performance, and competition.

The basic rules for 3v3 and 4v4 are:

- Elimination of the specialized position of goalkeeper.
- No offsides.
- When the ball goes out of play over a touch line or end line it is put back into play with a kick or dribble.
- After a goal is scored it is put back into play by a kick or dribble.
- There are field supervisors or managers instead of referees. The intent of the adult supervision must be to ensure a safe environment and to facilitate continuous play and fun.
- Players can score a goal from anywhere on the field.

A Model U5 and U6 Soccer Program

The model under 5 program has the players meet once per week on a Saturday or Sunday for an hour, eight times during the fall and spring. The players are assigned to a coach. Each coach needs to find two assistants to help with the hour of soccer for the U5 players. The hour long soccer session for the U5 players is divided evenly into two 30 minute stages: activities and games.

The activity stage needs to be dynamic with players moving throughout the session. Each session should start with simple activities and move to more complex activities with no line. It is also recommended that each activity stage end with an activity that has a point to attack and a point to defend.

The game stage has the coach divide his players into groups of 3 and 4 and meet another coach's group. Each group of 3 and 4 play a game against the other coach's group of 3 and 4. The field needs to be rectangular with the dimensions being about 25yds by 40yds with a small goal on each end line. The coaches, therefore, will need to set up three fields in order to allow all players to participate simultaneously. Communication between the coaches allows for the strongest groups to play against each other.

The model U6 program follows the same guidelines; however, the players meet for 90 minutes. The 90 minute session is again split evenly between activities and games.

Frequent short water breaks should be provided. The characteristics of the U5 and U6 soccer players show us these children have an fatigue rate and a rapid recovery.

The Session

We have developed eight weeks of practice plans for the U5 and U6 coach.

Every activity and session follows the principles of youth coaching, the characteristics of the U5 and U6 soccer players, and a simple to complex progression.

Week 1

Activity 1 I can do something. Can You?

The coach demonstrates individual motor skills and challenges the players to duplicate the skill. The motor skills can include twisting, turning, hopping, skipping, jumping, running fast, backward walk, backward jog, etc.

Activity 2 I can do something with the ball. Can You?

The coach demonstrates throwing the ball and catching, bouncing, the ball and catching, catching with one hand, rolling the ball with the hands small kicks (dribbling), rolling the ball with the feet, etc and challenges the players to duplicate each activity.

Activity 3 Can you do something with the ball that I can not do?

The coach challenges the player's creativity with the ball. The coach must attempt any and all successful challenges.

Activity 4 Ball retrieval

Each player hands the coach the ball and the coach throws the ball away a short distance. The players then return with the ball and hand the ball to the coach for a repetition. The coach can restrict the players to feet only touching the ball and the number of touches of the ball needed before returning the ball back to the coach. The coach can then move once all the players are retrieving the ball to impose the demand of players dribbling with their head up.

Activity 5 Gate Dribbling

The coach arranges sets of two cones separated by one yard. The players then attempt to score as many points as possible by dribbling through as many gates as possible in 30 seconds. The coach then challenges the players to beat their own record. The coach can require the players to go through a different gate before returning to a gate.

Activity 6 Crabs and Lobsters (direction)

The coach sets up a 10 by 15 yard grid and has half the players sit down spread out in the grid. The coach shows the players how to move like a crab using only their hands and feet. The remaining half attempts to dribble the ball through the group. Repeat activity a few times and switch roles of the two groups. Encourage changing direction in an effort to avoid the crabs.

Week 2

Activity 1 Red Light/Green Light

The coach sets up a grid 15 yards by 20 yards and has all the players line up on one of the 15 yard lines. He then stands on the other 15 yard line. When his back is to the players they may move forward. The coach can restrict the movements to any motor skills such as hopping, skipping, brisk walk, jog, run. After one turn allow the players to be the initiator of the movement.

Activity 2 Red Light/Green Light with the ball

Same as above with the ball added. The players must manipulate the ball while moving.

Activity 3 Sharing

All players dribble the ball within the same 15 yard by 20 yard grid. Once the coach calls the command of share, the players leave their ball and find a new ball. Encourage players to dribble with head up and run with head up to find a new ball. Once they find a new ball they continue dribbling until the next share call.

Activity 4 Tractor/Trailer

Players get in a group of two. One player is the tractor and leads the trailer. The tractor dribbles the ball through the grid. The trailer must follow and stay as close as possible. On the coach's command the players switch roles. The coach can restrict speed of play by moving from a simple to complex progression.

Activity 5 Individual Crabs and Lobsters

Same games as in week one but the grid is 5 yards by ten yards with only one player in the grid moving like a crab. One player attempts to dribble by the crab. Switch roles after a few repetitions. The coach will need to set up enough grids to have all players on task.

Activity 6 Ladder Crabs and Lobsters

Same as above but two players are in grid acting as crabs. They are in a field formation. That is one behind the other. Once the player dribbles by the first crab they must take on the second crab. Encourage changing direction to beat an opponent.

Week 3

Activity 1 Everybody's it

A grid approximately 20 yards by 15 yards is set up with all the players in the grid. A tag game is then set up where as everyone avoids everyone while attempting to tag anyone. The coach can restrict the players to playing the game while hopping, skipping, hopping, walking, walking backwards, or use no restrictions. The coach now can restrict the tagging to below the waist, then below the knee.

Activity 2 Everybody's It with the ball

Same as above but the players manipulate the ball while playing.

Activity 3 Pick your path

The coach used the same grid from above and places numerous cones throughout the grid. The players then start at one end line and dribble through the grid avoiding cones. Encourage changing direction and creatively picking a path instead of dribbling in a straight line.

Activity 4 Race track dribbling

The coach sets up two ovals that form a circular channel that becomes a race track. The players dribble around the oval at the speed the coach commands. The coach can command the players to switch directions.

Activity 5 Number Dribbling

The coach sets up a 15 yard by 20 yard grid with two cones outside the grid at about the same distance. Each player is assigned a number. They dribble throughout the grid. When their number is called they race around one of the cones with the ball and back into the grid. The coach can call out multiple numbers at a time.

Activity 6 Pick your path with defenders

Same as pick your path but one player starts in the grid as a defender. This player prevents the dribblers from getting across the grid. Add defenders to make the activity more complex.

Week 4

Activity 1 Cone touch

The coach arranges many cones on the field. On the coach's command the players touch as many cones as possible in the allotted time. They then try to beat their record. The coach can restrict the movements to motor skills such as hopping, skipping, jumping, rolling, etc. The coach needs to encourage the players to use alternate hands when touching cones and to touch the cone on the move instead of stopping to touch the cone.

Activity 2 Cone touch with a ball

Same as above but the players do the activity while manipulating the ball with their feet.

Activity 3 Island Dribbling

Players pretend they are on an island and must keep active to survive. They dribble the ball throughout Island made by cones. If they dribble off the island they must perform a penalty before coming back. The penalty can be ten ball touches. The coach can place hazards throughout the island such as a snake pit or cliffs by using cones. The players then have other obstacles to avoid.

Activity 4 Island dribbling with head hunters

Same as above but some players become head hunters (defenders) who attempt to dispossess the dribblers of the ball. When this occurs the player who was dispossessed brings the ball back onto the island and continues the activity.

Activity 5 Sharks and Minnows

One player starts in a 15 yard by 20 yard grid and the other players begin on a 15 yard line. The group of players attempts to dribble through the grid. Those players who do not make it through the grid become a shark and help the defender. Repeat activity until everyone becomes a shark. Repeat entire activity a couple of times.

Activity 6 One Vs One dribbling

Players are placed in groups of two with each player having a cone to defend. The player with the ball in each group attempts to dribble the ball to the cone their opponent is defending and have the ball touch the cone. Do not allow the defender to stand near the cone. They must defend the ball at the ball. When possession changes the roles change.

Week 5

Activity 1 Leg Split Tag

In a 20 yard by 20 yard grid the coach attempts three players to attempt to freeze the entire group. The three players tag the remaining players. The tagged player must stand frozen with their legs apart. A team mate who has not been frozen may crawl through the frozen players legs to unfreeze this player. The coach can restrict movements to walk, job, hop, skip, etc.

Activity 2 Leg Split tag with the ball

Same as above but with the only two designated players and the dribbling player must dribble the ball through the frozen player's legs to unfreeze the tagged player.

Activity 3 Hospital Tag

In the same grid from above each player dribbles their ball avoiding the other players. Each player attempts to tag other players while not being tagged. When one is tagged they must hold the spot they ere tagged (hold a bandage on their injury) while continuing to dribble. Once tagged for a third time they go to the hospital and perform a small penalty and return with no bandages.

Activity 4 Knock Out

Each player has a ball and dribbles in the grid from above. They attempt to keep possession of their ball while dispossessing others. Once a player's ball is kicked out of the grid they must immediately chase the ball. If they get to the ball while it is still moving they come directly back into the game. If the ball stops rolling before they get to it they must perform a small penalty before reentering the game.

Activity 5 Shielding

Players form groups of two with one ball. When the coach commands stop the player with the ball wins. The coach needs to demonstrate or have a player demonstrate keeping the body between the ball and the opponent.

Activity 6 One Vs One to a line

Each group of two has their own 7 yard by 10 yard grid. Play begins with each player starting on an opposite 7 yard line. The player with the ball initiates the activity by touching the ball. The first touch of the ball by touching the ball the opponent begins defending. The players attempt to dribble over the opponent's line.

Week 6

Activity 1 Leg Split Runs

The group is divided into two groups. One of the groups stands in the 15 yard by 20 yard grid with their legs apart. The remaining players attempt to get through as many legs as possible in 30 seconds. They get a chance to beat their own record. The groups then switch roles.

Activity 2 Leg Split with ball

Same as above but the players only have to dribble the ball through the other group of player's legs to receive a point.

Activity 3 Car game

In the same grid from above the players imagine they are driving a car (the ball). The coach starts the group in first gear (walking) and increases the speed by changing gears. If a player crashes into another player they receive a ticket and a point on their driving license. If they drive off the road they receive a ticket and a point on their driving record. The coach (policeman) can hold his hands above his head to represent a red light. Players who do not stop in a reasonable amount of time receive a point on their driving record.

Activity 4 Mad Max

A crazy driver is added to the above game without a ball. This crazy driver must attempt to crash the cars off the road. Once a ball is off the road the driver must immediately chase the ball. If they catch the ball before it stops rolling they come immediately back into the game. If the ball stops rolling first they must perform a small penalty before reentering the activity.

Activity 5 Steal a car

Same as above but multiple crazy drivers are added. The crazy drivers now try to possess the ball instead of kicking it out of the grid. Once a driver is dispossessed of their car they must attempt to steal another player's car.

Activity 6 One Vs One to gates

Gates are set up through the same grid from above. Players are in a group of two with one between the two. The player with the ball attempts to dribble through as many gates as possible. When dispossessed by their partner the roles are reversed.

Week 7

Activity 1 Number Movement

The coach sets up a 15 yard by 15 yard grid with 3 cones evenly distributed on each line. The players begin the activity in a filed line dissecting the grid. On the coaches command they move to one line or the other. The coach then labels the lines by numbers. On the command of the coach the players run to the line corresponding to the number called and back to the center. The players can be restricted in their movement by requiring side shuffle, hop, skip, etc.

Activity 2 Number Movement with ball

Same as above but ball is added.

Activity 3 Follow the leader

The group gets in a line with a ball each. The leader of the line moves while constantly changing direction. The entire line must follow. Switch line leader frequently.

Activity 4 Pirate's Raid

The team is split into two even groups. Two boxes are set up about 12 yards apart that represent pirate ships. Each group places their ball in their designated ship. On the coaches command they must attempt to raid the other ship of soccer balls (no defending is allowed). When the coach commands stop the team with the most balls in their ship wins.

Activity 5 Pirate's Raid with opposition

Same as above but each team of pirates can use soccer rules to prevent their ship from being raided.

Activity 6 You're Otta Hear

A field is set up with a goal at each end. The group is divided into two teams. Each team starts in a line near midfield. The coach introduces a ball into the field and two players from each team enter and play. When a goal is scored or the ball is played out of the field the coach commands you're otta here and introduces a new ball for the next group of two players from each team. (The coach needs to start with a large supply of soccer balls.)

Week 8

Activity 1 Perpendicular runs

The team is separated into two even groups and starts on perpendicular lines in a 15 yard by 15 yard grid. On the coach's command the players must get through to their opposite line without crashing. The coach can require different restrictions on the movements. The coach needs to encourage moving with the players' heads up.

Activity 2 Perpendicular Runs with the ball

Same as above but ball is added for the players to dribble across.

Activity 3 Triangle Tag

Each player gets a partner and is assigned to a triangle. Triangles are set up with cones arranged one yard apart. Both players have a ball and one player attempt to catch their partner and tag them. Roles are reversed.

Activity 4 Base Tag

Same set up as above but now the triangles represent a sage base. One player is chased by their partner from base to base. The coach can restrict the amount of time a player may remain in a base. Switch roles often.

Activity 5 One Vs One to gates

Gates are set up through a 20 yard by 20 yard grid. Players are in a group of two with one ball between the two. The player with the ball attempts to dribble through as many gates as possible. When dispossessed by their partner the roles are reversed.

Activity 6 You're Outta Hear

A field is set up with a goal at each end. The group is divided into two teams. Each team starts in a line near midfield. The coach introduces a ball into the field and two players from each team enter and play. When a goal is scored or the ball is played out of the field the coach commands you're otta here and introduces a new ball for the next group of two players from each team. (The coach needs to start with a large supply of soccer balls.)

Variation Practice Session

Activity 1 Stop/Go/Fall/Change Direction

In a 20 yard by 20 yard grid the players are encouraged to run throughout the grid. The coach call out commands and the children perform each task. The coach should emphasize that when a player falls down they get back up immediately. The coach also needs to emphasize changes of direction and speed need to be explosive. Intermittently throughout the activity the coach can ask the players to stop and balance on one foot with eyes open and with eyes shut.

Activity 2 Stop/Go/Fall/Change Direction with the ball

The ball is added to the previous activity.

Activity 3 Body Part Dribble

Players dribble ball throughout same grid as above and must stop ball with the body part the coach calls out. Coaches can emphasize quick starts when the go command is given. They can also call out a sequence of body parts that will develop flexibility when the players change directions.

Activity 4 Fish Swim

Players are divided into four groups and each is given a circle or square to call their fish home. The coach calls out for the fishes to swim. This signals the players to dribble the ball in the open space (ocean). When the coach calls out storm the players must dribble the ball back to their protected home where they are safe. The coach now becomes a fisherman and attempts to catch fish during the storm as the fish move back to their home. The fish from each caught fish's home may rescue the caught fish during future storms by tagging the player who was placed in an area in the center of the activity.

Activity 5 One Vs One Gate Dribbling

Gates are set up through a 20 yard by 20 yard grid. Players are in a group of two with one ball between the two. The player with the ball attempts to dribble through as many gates as possible. When dispossessed by their partner the roles are reversed.

Activity 6 1v1, 2v2 Name Game

The coach sets up a field for the small sided portion of the day, however, the goals are much larger. The group of players are divided into half. Each half goes to a goal line and holds hands or locks arms. Girls can hold hands and boys should lock arms. The coach has all of the soccer balls at the intersection of midfield and the touchline. The coach calls out a player's name from each team. These players play one Vs one to their opponent's goal. The players remaining connected in goal now must move together to defend the goal. Repeat activity making sure we call out players that are skilled like each other. We can go to 2

names per team to create a 2Vs2. More than one game of 1Vs1 or 2Vs2 can go on at the same time.

A Look Forward

As said before, players at the U5 and U6 age group need to spend as much time with the ball at their feet as possible during their soccer experience. The characteristics of children this age show us the players are selfish; therefore, soccer instruction needs to capitalize on this selfishness by present dribbling activities and instruction to spur their development in an age appropriate manner. As the players progress in age and gain more soccer experience, the game will need creative dribblers. Players that have not spent time in a program devoted to dribbling at this age will have lost an opportunity to be a creative dribbler and are less likely to be able to contribute to their future team's success in this manner.

As players progress to the U7 age group, most clubs give the players distinctive uniforms and practice throughout the week. Games are likely to be held during the weekend and structure is added with lines on the field and possibly a referee. Most clubs play 4vs4 or 5vs5. USYSA recommends 4vs4 but some clubs play 5vs5 by including a goalkeeper. The reason some clubs have elected to add a goalkeeper is to challenge the players to beat a goalkeeper when shooting. Goal scoring ability is lacking at the highest levels. Clubs can foster the player's ability to score goals by adding a goalkeeper. It is much easier to score a goal in an unprotected goal when compared to beating a goalkeeper.

Most U8 programs continue to play 4vs4 or 5vs5. Referees are most often added. Some U8 teams play in a local tournament. The concept of passing and receiving are added to the coaching curriculum if they were not added at the U7 level.

At the U9 age group players are most likely playing in a 7vs7 or 8vs8 format. Positions are introduced that will include forwards, midfielders, and defenders. It is important that players are not locked into one position for a season. Players need to experience all of the soccer positions. Some leagues begin to stratify the level of play by holding tryouts or evaluations that allow for players to play with and against players of their own ability. Localized travel teams at the U9 age group begin.

Seven a side and eight a side continues to be used at the U10-U12 age level. Most clubs offer travel teams and at least one level of play for recreation players.

The U13 and older age groups play 11 a side.

Coaching Questionnaire

1. Beliefs

(a) Why do you want to be a youth coach?

(b) Why do we have youth soccer?

(c) What are your responsibilities? To each player, to the team, to yourself, and to the community.

(d) Define a successful team?

2. Motivation

(a) I am interested to in coaching because...

(b) What do you enjoy most about coaching?

(c) What do you enjoy least about coaching?

3. Experiences

(a) Past-What were your personal childhood experiences in sports?
Was it enriching or inhibiting?

(b) Present self-evaluation. What are you doing now?

(c) Future- What experiences will I seek to improve my coaching?

4. Methods

(a) What is my coaching style?

(b) At what point will I involve the players in the decision making
process. Pre-During-Post practice?