



Melrose Youth Soccer

Coaches Manual



Compiled by:
Melrose Youth Soccer Board of Directors



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A message from the Melrose Youth Soccer Executive Board

It is with great pleasure that we take this time to congratulate you for taking on the challenging responsibility of coaching the children of Melrose Youth Soccer. Our belief is that coaches form the backbone of our organization, because in the time you spend with your players, you are not only responsible for each player's athletic development, but also his or her social and emotional development as well. In that sense, there is a natural and appropriate parallel between coaching and teaching: the field is a classroom, the athletes are students, and certainly, the coach *is* a teacher.

It is in that spirit that we hope to lead Melrose Youth Soccer in a direction where not only will we develop terrific soccer players, but good people as well. We are certain that every parent expects their child's teachers to be of high quality, certified, and committed to their own professional development, so too should they have those same expectations for their child's soccer coach. Melrose Youth Soccer has undertaken a serious commitment toward the education of all of our coaches, and will be working with both the National Soccer Coaches Association of America and the Mass. Youth Soccer organization in the future to provide that instruction. Ultimately, like our teachers, we envision all our coaches to be certified so as to offer the very best for our young players.

MYS will pay for your course: learn more from the Melrose Youth Soccer website.

We also envision the creation of a true "soccer culture" in our community where players at the earliest age dream of playing high school soccer for Melrose High with parents and coaches working together in a positive fashion. The old adage of- "It takes a village." will be the cornerstone of this effort. The bottom line will always be that we have a positive, fun, and challenging environment for our all players to be the very best they can be... just like in the classroom.

About this Manual

A great deal has been learned in the past twenty years about kids and youth sports: why they start a sport, why they leave one, and how they learn best. To be an effective coach, you must:

- Be a good role model.
- Understand the players in your age group, and have realistic expectations for them.
- Use a variety of age-appropriate games to teach soccer skills.

This manual was created to help each coach meet these criteria. In each section, you will find information describing the characteristics of players in each age group, the MYS philosophy regarding that age group and sample games you can use in practices. Coaches are expected to read and understand the MYS code of ethics and to be familiar with the material that pertains to their age group. You will also find information about fields, rainouts, rescheduling and registration. If you are in doubt, ask your age group director or a board member for clarification – we're here to help!

The following code of ethics has been developed by the NCSAA, the National Soccer Coaching Association of America, and Melrose Youth Soccer. MYS expects its coaches to understand and support it.

Melrose Youth Soccer Code of Ethics (as outlined by the NSCAA)

1. Soccer is the player's game. The paramount concern of coaches is the holistic development, welfare, enjoyment and safety of their players.
2. Coaches bear responsibility for teaching players to strive for success while playing fairly, observing the laws of the game, and the highest levels of sportsmanship
3. Coaches shall treat officials with respect and shall teach their players to do the same
4. Our opponents are worthy of being treated with respect. Coaches will model such respect for opponents and expect their players to do the same.
5. The coach shall model grace, dignity and composure in *both* victory *and* defeat.
6. Coaches shall model inclusive behavior; actively supporting cultural diversity while opposing all types of discrimination including (but not limited to) racism and sexism at all levels of the game
7. Coaches are responsible for taking an active role in education about prevention and treatment of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse both in their lives and in the lives of their players.
8. Coaches shall seek to honor those who uphold the highest standards and principles of soccer and shall use appropriate protocol to oppose and eliminate all behavior that brings disrepute to the sport; violence, abuse, dishonesty, disrespect, and violations of the laws of the game and rules governing competition.

MYS Board of Directors 2007-2008Season

Name	Board Position
Rich Altonaga	Co-President
Bill DeSimone	Co-President
Ron Pesaturo	Treasurer
Gary Smith	Registrar
Heather McSween	Secretary
Dennis McCarthy	Fields Coordinator
Heather McSween	Fields Scheduler
Trish McElligott	Fields Manager
Stephen Finley	Referee Coordinator
Bill DeSimone	Equipment Coordinator
Dave Foulser	Website administrator
Gary Smith	Munchkin Coordinator
Sean O'Brien	U-8 City Coordinator
Steve Silveira	U-10 City Coordinator
Rich Altonaga	Travel Coordinator
Beth Fantozzi	Travel Administrator
Tom Russell	Communications Director
Chris Lippert	Board Member

All board members can be reached via email – addresses are listed on the MYS website, www.melroseyouthsoccer.net

The MYS website is also a very important source of information for parents – let your parents know that it's out there for their use too!

Fields: All of the Nitty Gritty

A representative from MYS' Board of Directors (Field Coordinator) serves as liaison between the City of Melrose and the league. The Field Scheduler works with the city to receive permits for use of the fields, scheduling issues and submits requests for field maintenance as appropriate. Although the city maintains the field, Melrose Youth Soccer measures and lines the fields for soccer. High School Varsity sports receive priority use.

PRACTICE:

- Each team is granted practice time on a field appropriately sized for the age group.
Note: The City league typically uses one (1) one-hour practice session per week and the Travel league uses two (2) one-hour practice sessions per week.
- In many cases the field will be shared by 2 teams at once, each team taking half the given space.
- Coaches sharing the field must respect the space of the other coach and not interfere with the drills and games being run.
- In some cases, such as Pine Banks turf in the spring, the field is shared by three (3) or four (4) teams at a time. On those occasions it is expected that each team has 20 minutes of "goal time" during the 60 minute practice.
- All coaches must start and end practices on time so as not to interfere with a team awaiting their turn for practice. Coaches arriving for practice should not interfere with a team or a coach who is in the middle of practice. Stay to the side.

GAME DAY:

- Coaches using the field for the first game of the day must set up the corner flags and anchor the goals with either a sand bag or hook.
- ALL SUCH EQUIPMENT IS LOCATED IN THE LOCK BOX ON EACH FIELD.
- Coaches scheduled for the last game of the day must return the corner flags, sand bags and anchors to the lock box.
- The city provides barrels for trash at each field that will be emptied weekly. Coaches must clean-up their technical area after each game and pick up any discarded water bottles and trash.

FIELDS CLOSING:

- A representative from MYS will evaluate the playability of all fields by 6:30am on each day during the weekend games are scheduled.
- In the event that the fields are deemed unplayable the coach of the first game of the day will be called and the Melrose Youth Soccer web-site (<http://www.melroseyouthsoccer.net>) will be updated with the field status.
- Games scheduled to be played later than 10am should check the MYS web-site for field information.
- During the week, field evaluation will be done by 2:30pm.
- Coaches will NOT be called regarding mid-week closings. An email will be sent from the appropriate age director and/or MYS Field Manager and the MYS web-site will contain the status.
- When in doubt check the website and email BEFORE practicing.
- Reasons to close field include: thunder and lightening, pouring rain, standing water left from rain earlier in week.

RESCHEDULING GAMES:

Games are rescheduled in the event of inclement weather, or school or religious event conflicts ONLY. When this situation occurs, use the following guidelines:

1. Contact the appropriate field scheduler (see below for contact person for each field) to discuss need for reschedule.
2. Identify two-three possible alternative times and dates for game.
Note: In travel it is the responsibility of the host team to be most accommodating.
3. Confer with the opposing coach and offer possible make-up dates.
4. When coaches agree on time / date reconfirm with the appropriate field scheduler.
5. The Field Scheduler will confirm the time/date and reserve it for the make-up game. In U8 and U10 City the program coordinators will also confirm the referee with the MYS referee coordinator.

Coaches: You MUST go through your field scheduler when setting up make-up games. Failure to do so can lead to confusion with the Referee Coordinator and field conflicts.

For travel only;

6. Travel teams MUST confirm with their Middlesex league (MYSL) age directors. Your Middlesex league (MYSL) age director will officially cancel and reschedule the travel game.
7. Fall Season: The field scheduler will confirm with the MYS referee coordinator regarding a rescheduled game.
8. Spring Season: Your MYSL age director will request a referee for your rescheduled game.

SCHEDULE COORDINATORS BY AGE GROUP

Munchkins : The Munchkins schedule is managed by the Munchkins Coordinator

U8 : U8 games and practice schedules are managed by the U8 City Coordinator.

U10 : U10 City practice and game schedules are managed by the U10 City Coordinator.

The City Coordinators will interact with the Field Scheduler to obtain their initial practice times and game times and to confirm field availability for make-up games.

U10T, U12 – U18 : U10T, U12, U14, U16 and U18 Travel practice and game schedules are managed by the MYS Field Scheduler.

FIELD MAINTAINANCE:

- The Field Manager for MYS will be the contact person for any field maintenance and safety concerns.
- Measuring and lining the fields will be supervised by the MYS Field Manager.

Heather McSween
MYS Field Scheduler 2007-2008
heathermcsween@msn.com

Trish McElligott
MYS Field Manager 2007-2008
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Mass. Youth Soccer State Curriculum for U6 (Munchkins)

NCSAA “Parent” license or Mass. Youth Soccer “G” Course Recommended for coaches.

In this level, Melrose Youth Soccer expects its coaches to provide a fun and supportive environment for players through the use of games. U6 players practice for one hour per week, typically on Saturday afternoons at the Stone Zoo field in Stoneham. The emphasis is on skill development, not competition, so intra-squad scrimmages are expected to take place in the last 15-20 minutes of a practice.

Skill Development Goals:

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch
- Juggle his/her own age (allow for one bounce between juggles)

Characteristics of U6 Players:

Although sometimes we may mistake 5-6 year-olds for little adults, they are clearly not little adults. They have many years of childhood and development to enjoy before they are able to look at life in a similar fashion to adults. The reason for this is that they need time to intellectually, emotionally, and physically develop. Although we do live in the same world, when seen through our own eyes, the world adults and children experience is quite different.

U6 Players are often:

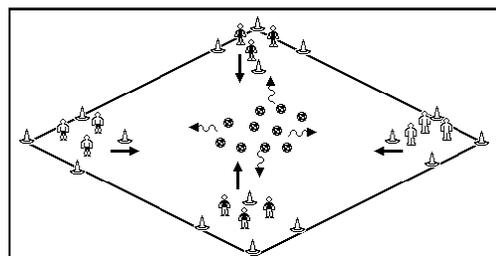
- focused on themselves – reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel.
- unable to see the world from another’s perspective – it is “the world according to me” time. Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic.
- everything is in the here and now – forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.
- heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore.
- enjoying playing, not watching – they feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing.
- limited attention span (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions concise and to the point. When in an open environment, such as a park, their attention span will dwindle towards 10 seconds.
- effort is synonymous with performance – if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm.
- active imaginations – if we utilize their imaginations in practice activities, they will love practice!
- look for adult approval – watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!”
- unable to think abstractly – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic.
- typically have 2 speeds -- extremely fast and stopped.
- usually unaware of game scores – we should keep it that way.
- often like to fall down just because it is fun – they are just children having fun 😊

- often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot – they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach them left and right.

Some Recommended Games for U6 Players:

1. Tag---Every child dribbles a soccer ball in the space defined while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing twice in a row, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game. *Version 2:* Players must tag other players on their knees.
2. Red light/Green light---All players have a ball and dribble in a limited space (or towards the coach). When coach says “red light”, players must stop ball and put foot on top of ball. When coach says “yellow light”, players must dribble very slowly. When coach says “green light”, players dribble fast. Coach controls this game with frequency of light changes and variety of changes. Once players catch on to this game, add light of other colors and affix different actions to them. (i.e. purple light = hop back and forth over ball, orange light = run around the ball, black light = dance, blue light = hide behind the ball etc. etc.)
3. Freeze Tag---Break up the group into two teams. Everyone must dribble their soccer ball, but one team tries to tag (freeze) the other team. If they do tag a player on the other team, that player must freeze, place their ball above their head and spread their legs. Another player on their team must kick his/her ball through the frozen player’s legs to unfreeze the teammate. If all players are frozen, game ends and the frozen team becomes the taggers. Otherwise, stop game after a few minutes and have team reverse roles. *Version 2:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion
4. Sharks & Minnows --- All players except one (the minnows) line up on one side of the grid, and attempt to dribble their soccer balls over to the other side. One player (the shark) tries to knock away soccer balls from the minnows. Any minnow losing his/her ball becomes a shark and must help the shark in the next round. The winner is the child who is the last minnow. When Beth plays this one with her players, the sharks always yell “fishy, fishy cross my ocean!” before the minnows start across.
5. Planets---Set up cones into multiple squares or triangles that serve as planets (or cities). All players must follow coach’s order and dribble into the planet he calls out. Coach can have all players follow same directions or break up team so they start at different planet and then have them dribble through the solar system in clockwise or counterclockwise fashion. Coach can have groups dribble in opposite direction through the solar system.
6. Kangaroo Jack---All players except two or three begin with a ball. Players without balls are kangaroo jacks and must hop like a kangaroo and try to tag players. If a player gets tagged, he/she becomes a kangaroo as well until all players are turned into kangaroos.
7. Snake---In an appropriate space for the numbers you have, have all players dribbling soccer balls except for 2-3 players to start. These players hold hands and work together as one snake to tag the other players, The players with balls try to avoid getting tagged by the snake. If they are tagged, the join hands with players making up the snake the snake grows until all players are part of the snake. The snake must stay together as one animal and not break off into little parts. Encourage fun by having the snake hiss. 😊

8. Ball Tag---Similar to other tag games except players try to tag others with their soccer ball instead of their hand. Have them keep count of how many times they kick their soccer ball and tag another person. Have the tag count if their ball hits another player or that player's ball. Can have the players tag the coach for 10 or 20 points. Then can have players tag other selected players for 50 or 100 points etc. etc. *Version 2:* Rather than having players tag each other, have them tag the coach by kicking their soccer ball. The coach moves around without a ball to avoid being tagged. Have players count up how many they got and can do the same variations as in the other game by affixing a lot of points to players.
9. Capture the Balls---Set up three or four "home bases" (squares) with cones roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break up the players into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coaches command the teams are free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home bases. Teams can steal balls from each others' home bases. Coach calls time and counts up how many balls are in each space to determine a winner. Coach allows team 1 minute to make up a new team strategy before playing again.
10. Moving Goal---2 coaches use a pinnie or an extra piece of clothing to form a movable goal with each coach serving as a post and the shirt serving as the crossbar. Players each have a ball and try to score by kicking their ball through the goal. However, the coaches constantly move and turn to force the players to keep their head up and to change direction as they dribble.
11. Keepie-Uppie --- Encourage the youngest players to start juggling early. This important soccer skill is fun to practice and can be used by young players if you allow them to let the ball bounce. Players use knees, feet, chest (anything but hands) to keep the ball up.



***** Every practice should include a short scrimmage*****

US YOUTH SOCCER & MASS YOUTH SOCCER GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

Under 6's play 3 vs 3 (without a goalkeeper)

Field Size: 20 to 30 yds long X 15 to 20 yds wide

Ball: #3

Mass. Youth Soccer State Curriculum for U8 Players

NCSAA “Parent” license or Mass. Youth Soccer “G” or “F” Course Recommended for coaches.

In this level, Melrose Youth Soccer introduces a game day in addition to the practice day. U8 players practice for one hour per week at varying times during the week. You will have to work with your age group director to determine a practice time that works for you. Game days are Saturdays and Sundays. For 2006, MYS is adopting the international standard of 4v4 for its game format, and it is expected that all MYS coaches will become familiar with the spirit and rules that govern this format. More about the 4v4 format follows at the end of this section.

Skill Development Goals:

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Shielding
- Soft first touch
- Introduce proper shooting technique
- Introduce passing

Characteristics of U8 Players:

Although U8 children may begin to be far more developmentally advanced than U6 children, we must remain patient and not try to force them to develop too quickly. Dribbling still needs to be the primary focus of our efforts, though passing and shooting should be introduced at this age as well. U8 players tend to work best when in pairs and we should allow them to work in pairs (coach selected) often. Similar to the U6 children, we need 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.

U8 Players are often:

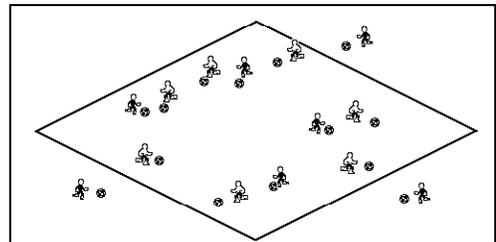
- tend to play well in pairs – unlike 6 year-olds, these children enjoy playing in pairs. Try to set up the pairs yourself to control the games and manage the personalities
- are now able to take another’s perspective – they now have a sense of how other’s are
- feeling still unable to think abstractly – still do not have this capability, be patient
- heating and cooling system still less efficient than adults – still make sure to give frequent water breaks
- still much prefer playing to watching – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines of players waiting to kick a ball!!
- 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.
- have an understanding of time and sequence – 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
- extremely aware of adult reactions – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they look for your reaction frequently

- seek out adult approval – be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you skills. They very much need reassurance and you need to help build their confidence to try new things at this age.
- begin to become 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 to is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player.
- some will keep score – the competitive motors churn faster in some than others. Surely some parents are fueling the motors with their own. Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age. Results should not be important at this age.
- beginning to develop motor memories – by attempting fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements.
- less active imaginations than U6 players – still have active imaginations by adult standards, but some of the “cute” silliness that 6 year-olds allowed will not be appreciated by this group. Still, U8 players love to have fun - use their imaginations.

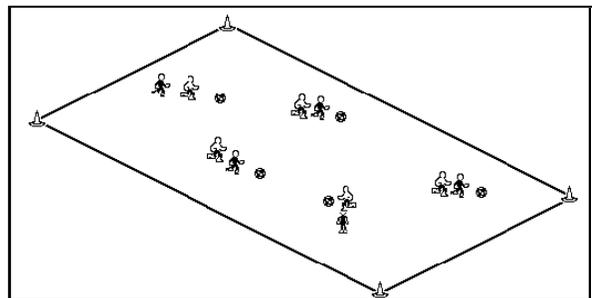
Some Recommended Games for U8 Players:

1. Free Dribble---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.

2. Knock Out---In same space as previous activity, have players dribble balls while trying to knock other player’s balls outside of the grid. Players can never leave their own ball. If their ball gets knocked out have them retrieve it quickly and get back into the game. (You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times).



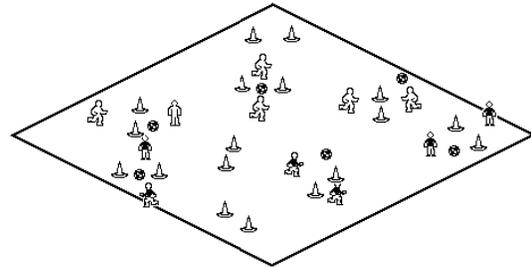
3. Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.



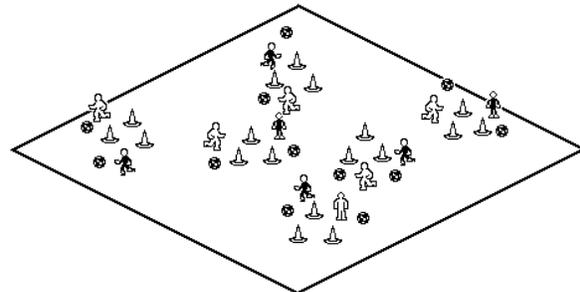
4. Marbles---Players are in pairs, each with a ball. This time instead of chasing each other, one player plays out his ball and the partner passes his own ball in an attempt to

strike the ball his partner played out. Players should keep track of how many times they hit their partner's ball. *Version 2:* Once players understand this game, make it fast paced by having the players take turns at trying to hit each other's ball without ever stopping. If player 2 misses player 1's ball, then player 1 immediately runs to his own ball and tries to hit player 2's ball (player 2 does not get to touch his ball after missing player 1's ball). After player 1 has a chance, then player 2 immediately tries to hit player 1's ball right back. etc. etc. This game is continuous and players should keep score. Hint: If 2 balls are very close to each other a player should kick their ball hard at the other ball so when they hit it, it is more difficult for the other to hit their ball back.

5. Gates Passing---Players are paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Have players pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.



6. Triangle Tag---Set up cones in a triangle formation with each side of the triangle being roughly 1 yard long. Every triangle has a pair of players, each with a ball. Similar to the tag game, one player is being chased and one is "it". However this time the player who is "it" tags the player by kicking her ball and hitting the other player's ball or hitting the player below the knee. Players can dribble in either direction around the triangle and must stay close to their own triangle. Neither play can go through the triangle.

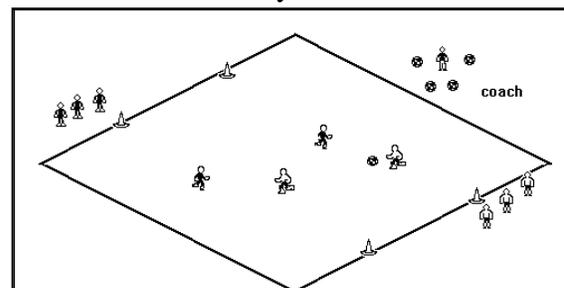


Version 2: Allow the player being chased to go through the triangle. When in the triangle she is safe. However, after going through triangle, player must go completely around triangle before she can go through triangle again. She cannot stop inside the triangle.

Version 3: Allow pairs to move from triangle to triangle (incorporates speed dribbling and traffic). If two pairs are at the same triangle at the same time that is fine, but players still only compete with their partner.

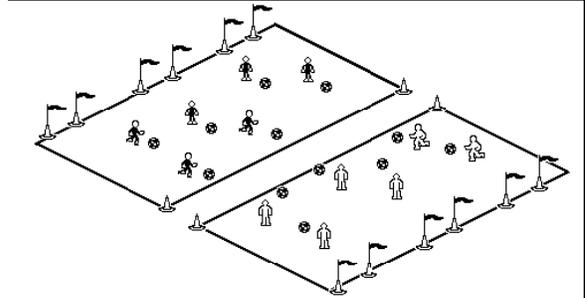
Note: To increase difficulty, do not count hitting a player below the knee as a tag.

7. Get Outta Here---Place two small (2 yard) goals at the end of a field 15 x 10 yards. Place half of team behind each goal and coach stands at halfway line with all balls. When coach plays out a ball the first two players run out and try to score on each other's goal. If the ball goes in the goal or out of bounds, the coach yells "get outta here" and plays in a new ball immediately for the next two players.



Version 2: Coach can stop yelling “get outta here” after a while and see if players recognize when balls go out and are attentive. *Version 3:* Coach can vary service of ball. Sometimes play it to one player, sometimes toss the ball up in the air. *Version 4:* Have the first two or three players from each group come out each time a new ball is played and play 2 vs. 2 or 3 vs. 3.

8. Clean Your Backyard--- Break group into two teams and have each team stay only on their half of the field. Place a 6 yard buffer zone between halves that no one can enter or cross. Each player needs a ball. Place three small (2-3yd) goals at the far end of each side of the field. Have both teams shoot balls at other team’s goals in an attempt to score through anyone of the small goals (below knee height). Players cannot cross the buffer zone or go into the other half. Balls get recycled naturally in the game. This is a competition and teams need to keep score. Play 2 or 3 games and have teams re-strategize between each game. Teams can play defense though no hands. Only shots with laces count as goals.



9. 2 vs. 1 Keepaway---In a grid 10x15 yds, three players play 2 vs. 1 continuous keepaway. Two attackers combine to keep the ball away from one defender. When the defender wins the ball, he or she immediately combines with the attacker he or she did not win the ball from and the attacker who lost the ball becomes the defender. Balls out of play are dribbled in or passed in.
10. 1 vs. 1 to Endlines---In a space that is wider than long (15 x 20 yds) each player defends one endline and attacks the other. Players score by dribbling the ball in control over the opposing player’s endline. *Version 2:* You can make this 2 vs. 2, 3 vs. 3 or 4 vs. 4.
11. Juggling – encourage players to keep the ball up continuously, but allow them a bounce if they need to. Juggling is a skill that players can practice between practices – see how players can improve – some MYS coaches offer candy for kids who can get their age, or different benchmarks – Skittles Challenge!

***** Every practice should include a scrimmage*****

US YOUTH SOCCER & MASS YOUTH SOCCER GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

Under 8’s play 4 vs 4 (*without a goalkeeper*)

Field Size: 25 to 35 yds long X 20 to 30 yds wide

Ball: #3

About the 4v4 Format:

The 4v4 format is designed to introduce young players to soccer tactics at the most basic possible level. A small sided game with fewer players allows each player more chances to touch the ball, and simplifies the decision making of players who are looking to work with a teammate. At the U8 level, players show varying degrees of awareness of their teammates, and this is to be expected – what we want is to have players start to expect that their teammates will be in predictable positions on the field.

As our players develop, we want them to understand that the attacking pass is best, but that the pass that keeps possession of the ball is important as well. For that to be possible, players must become aware of the shape of their team. On a team that is showing this awareness, players are not anchored into rigid positions, so a player at the back may make a run forward with the ball. In turn, a teammate must fill that space at the back to keep the team's shape. This type of soccer is very dynamic and fun, and enables the players to work together with each other to create a game that is also fun to watch.

This season, the U8 League will use two sets of markings around the goal:

- A 9 foot diameter semi-circle which is a “no fly zone” for players from both teams. Defenders should NOT be stationed at all times in front of this crease marker – defending is good in 4v4, but we do NOT want goalies in U8 soccer. Offensive players must also respect the crease, and can only score when shooting from outside of the area.
- A goal box - while we are not playing with goalies in 4v4, a small goal box will enclose the goal area. The primary use of the box is to train players to do goal kicks correctly – all offensive and defensive players must get clear of the area, and no player can touch the ball until it has cleared the goal box area.

Websites about 4v4

- Better Soccer, More Fun – the Dutch started it, and they still rule.
<http://www.betersoccermorefun.com/dwtext/why4v4.htm>
- Jeff Pill's Variations on 4v4.
<http://www.decatursports.com/drills/pills/Pills4v4PracticeSessions.htm>
- Indiana Youth Soccer - A look at the movement behind 4v4:
<http://www.indianayouthsoccer.org/2004/SSG/Articles%20SSG/Deconstruction%20of%20Youth%20Soccer.pdf>

(These links will be made available on our website for those who would rather not type long, long strings of characters)

Mass. Youth Soccer State Curriculum for U10 Players

NCSAA “State” license or Mass. Youth Soccer “F” or “E” Course Recommended for coaches.

Skill Development Goals:

- U-10 Continue with dribbling focus from U8
- Passing with inside and outside of both feet
- Shooting with both feet---using laces
- Receiving the ball with all parts of body
- Heading

Tactical Priorities

- Basic Attacking Ideas
- Basic Defending Ideas
- Comprehend 1 vs 1 concepts
- Comprehend 2 vs 1 concepts
- Introduction to 2 vs 2 concepts
- Comprehend roles of 1st and 2nd defenders
- Comprehend roles of 1st and 2nd attackers

As we move up the age ladder from the U8 level to the U10 level there are many differences we must attend to in order to provide an optimal experience for young players of this age. Tactically, players must get used to playing with a goalkeeper for the first time. In addition, a forward checking player is added to the diamond shape to provide another passing option. While there are many changes at this age level, there are also many similarities with U8, and the emphasis should remain on skill development.

Creating environments in which players get maximum repetitions of technical skills is key. Players at this age should still work on ball mastery and demonstrate growing familiarity and comfort with a ball at their feet. On a tactical level, players should begin to really grasp the uses of the diamond shape as they play 4v4 games in practice. Coaches should expect that players will switch fields to an open teammate when one side is crowded with players. It is also reasonable to teach players to make runs off the ball to create space via through balls and “give and go” plays.

Characteristics of U10 Players:

- attention span lengthens from U8---they start to show the ability to sequence thought and actions they start to think ahead and think “If this, then that”
- they are more inclined towards wanting to play soccer rather than being told to play
- demonstrate increased self-responsibility – bringing a ball, water and all gear should now be their complete responsibility
- they start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts
- children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure
- players greatly affiliate with their team or their coach—“I play for the Tigers” or “I play for coach Amy’s team”
- players at this age are extremely rule bound – players at this age take rules very literally – be aware of the implications of your rules and keep them simple.
- there is a wide continuum of maturity evident on most teams this is still a crucial age for technical skill development.

Some Recommended Games for U10 Players:

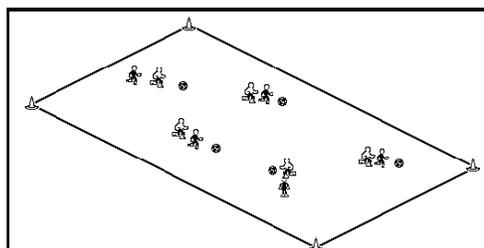
1. Free Dribble---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move.

Version 2: As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.

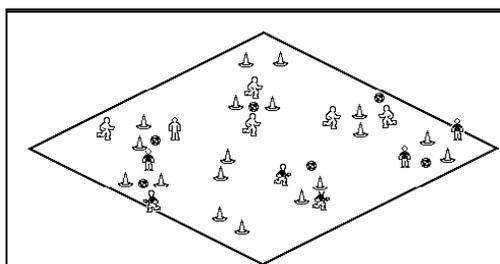
Version 3: Make the game a knockout game in which players try to knock each other's balls out of the grid while maintaining possession of their own.

Note: You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times. You do not want players sitting out.

2. Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.



3. Gates Passing---Same set up as previous game. However players are now paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Again, players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Similar to previous game, have them pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.

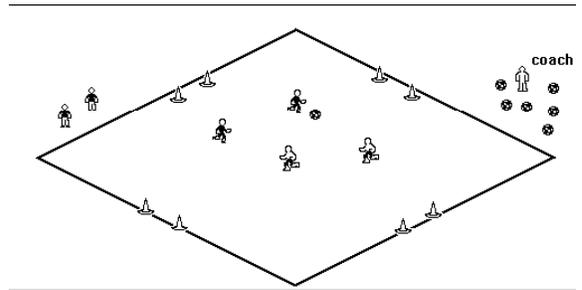


4. 1 vs. 1 to lines---In a grid 10x10 yards, players line up on opposite sides. The first player in each line alternates attacking the player opposite them. When the attacker dribbles over the line they score a goal. If the defender wins the ball he or she can counter attack to the opposite line to also score a goal. The players switch to the opposite line if a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other.

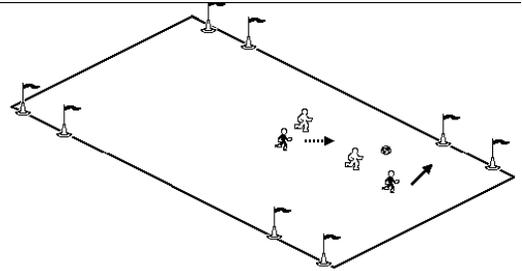
Version 2: Make the grid larger and make this a 2 vs. 2 or a 3 vs. 3 game.

5. 1 vs. 1 To Two Small Goals---Same grids as above except now there is a three foot goal in the middle of each line. Attackers try to score by passing the ball through the goal. Defenders can counter attack to the opposite goal if they win the ball. Players switch sides after a goal or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other.

6. 2 vs. 2 to Four Cross Goals---Teams defend one goal and have the opportunity to score on the other three, you must dribble through a goal to score a point. The goals are on the ends of a large cross in a square grid roughly 10yd X 10yd. Have one team of 2 on deck, they come on when a team gets scored on twice. Game is continuous, they must run on immediately.

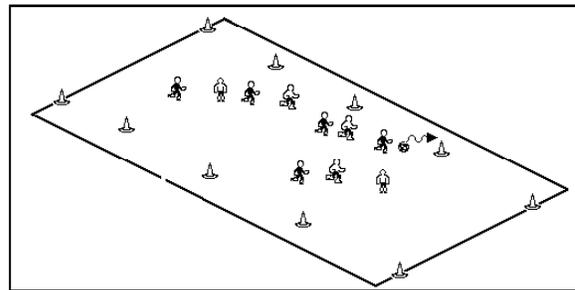


7. 2 vs. 2 To Four Small Goals---In a 15 X 15 yard grid with a small goal in each corner, teams of two attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The coach will set up as many grids as needed to accommodate the players. When the ball goes out of bounds it can be passed or dribbled in to play. The teams should be rotated every three minutes until all groups have played against each other.



Version 2: 3 vs. 3 in a 20 X 25 yard grid. Teams should show a triangle shape in attack.

8. 4 vs. 4 Endzone Game---Teams comprised of 4-6 players depending on numbers and space. To score you must pass the ball to a teammate into the opponent's end zone (created with discs). The player cannot go into the endzone until after the ball has been passed. Stress recognizing opportunities and timing of passes.



9. Triangle Goal Game---Make a triangle with three cones in the center of the field. The sides of the triangle each serve as a goal mouth so teams can shoot at three different goals. Place 2 goalies in the triangle and the 2 goalies must protect the three goal mouths. Two even teams play a normal soccer game, except they both can score on any of the three faces of the triangle for a point. The game is continuous and if a goalie catches the ball he just throws it out so the game continues.

Version 2: Use two balls at the same time.

10. 4 vs. 4 To Four Small Goals---In a 30 X 35 yard grid, the same rules as 3 vs. 3 but now players must show a diamond shape in attack.

***** Every practice should include a scrimmage*****

US YOUTH SOCCER & MASS YOUTH SOCCER GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

Under 10's play 6 vs 6 (including a goalkeeper)

Field Size: 45 to 60 yds long X 35 to 45 yds wide

Ball: #4

Mass. Youth Soccer State Curriculum for U12 Players

NCSAA “Regional” license or Mass. Youth Soccer “E” or “D” Course Recommended for coaches.

Skill Development Goals:

U-12 Continue with all U-10 focal points

- Speed Dribbling in Traffic
- Ability to chip the ball
- Accurately play long passes
- Offensive/Defensive Heading
- Power/Accuracy Shooting

Tactical Priorities

- Communication
- Basic Support Positions
- Receiving the Ball Away from Pressure
- Combination Play
- How and when to switch the point of attack
- Pressure vs Containing
- Proper 2 vs 2 roles
- Introduction to all roles in 3 vs 3

The period this age group is entering is often referred to as the dawn of tactics. Typically players of this age begin to understand the basic tactical situations of the game and are more aware of movement off the ball and the reasons for tactical choices. Problem-solving becomes systematic and these players tend to learn quickly. Children of this age typically are beginning to develop abstract awareness, so they can understand coaches when we talk about space and runs off of the ball. However, just because they understand these basic tactical concepts does not mean we should focus on these concepts entirely.

Players are still developing technically at this age, especially as they go through growth spurts and awkward phases. It is quite common to look out at a U12 field and see players that are physically the size of adults. Yet, other U12 players appear as if they could still be in the 3rd grade. These children are all growing at different rates and undergoing physical, mental, emotional, and social changes. The average age for the beginning of pubescence in girls is 10 years old with a range of 7 to 14; for boys it is age 12 with a range of 9 to 16.

As coaches, we need to be sensitive to these changes and their social implications when coaching this age group. Some players may pick up skills quickly, where as others may struggle. However, it may be the case that this is simply the result of differences in maturation. In a year, the slower developer may surpass the player who developed earlier. For this reason we need to be patient and keep open minds about all players through these years. They are aware of their struggles more than anyone else as peer evaluation is omnipresent at these ages. When we see them struggling, it is important for us to help them and to keep the game fun.

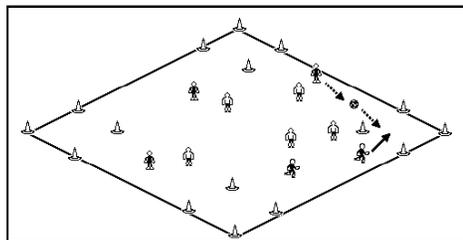
Tactically, the game shifts from 6v6 at U10 to 8v8. By arranging players in a 2-3-2 formation, the 3 midfield players act as the connectors for two complete diamond shapes. Also, for the first time, players can be expected to specialize in a position. A fast left footed player may spend lots of time playing left outside midfielder, for example.

Characteristics of U12 Players:

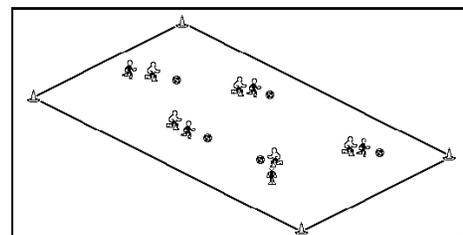
- all children are maturing at different rates
- players need to warm-up and stretch---muscle pulls and other nagging injuries are common otherwise
- players will typically understand elemental abstract concepts and hypothetical situations
- they like to solve problems
- peer evaluation is a constant - egos are sensitive
- coordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt
- technique still needs to be reinforced constantly
- playing too much can lead to overuse injuries
- playing too much and not feeling like they have a choice in the matter can lead to burnout and drop-out
- this is the dawn of tactics!
- keep asking the players to be creative and to take risks---we never want them to stop doing these things
- ask for feedback from them---they will tell you how things are going. Try to hand over leadership and ownership of the team to them
- keep it fun!!!

Some Recommended Games for U12 Players:

1. Four Square Passing---Form a grid 35x35 with squares roughly 4 yards across in each corner. Two teams of 4 to 6 players try to score by passing the ball to a teammate who makes a run into one of the four squares. Players in the squares cannot be defended against they can pass or dribble the ball out. Balls out of play can be passed or dribbled back into play.



2. Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.

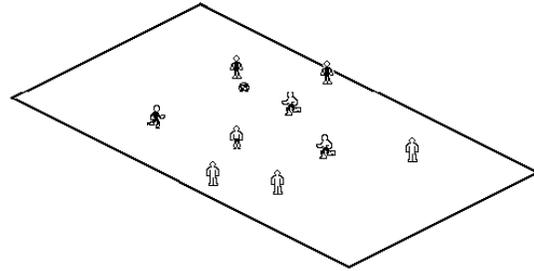


Version 2: make this competitive by breaking the group into two teams and seeing which team has more balls at the end of the time.

3. Colors-Warm Up---Half of the players in red pennies, half in blue. Teams playing together in the same space combine in the passing sequence blue-blue-red-red-blue-blue-red-red etc. etc. Ball can never stop, players can never stop moving, and ball cannot leave area of play. Coach can limit touch-count, mandate which foot to pass with or which side of foot to pass with as sees fit. When players can do first sequence

adequately and without frequent errors change the sequence to blue-blue-blue-red-red-red-blue-blue-blue etc. etc. Stress communication and technical passing points throughout. Make this activity competitive by counting errors and setting goals by lowering allowed errors.

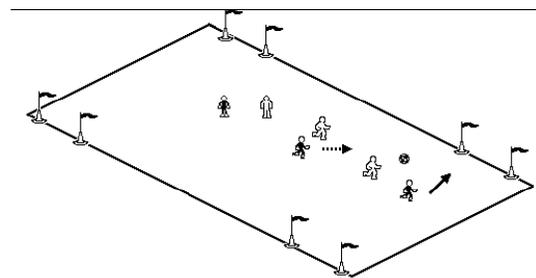
4. 2v2+2 or 3v3+3---Three distinct teams in colors (red, green, white), one team starts as defenders and the other 2 teams play together to keep the ball away from the defense (so it is actually 4v2 or 6v3). When the ball is taken by the defense, the color (two/three players) they stole it from becomes the new defenders. Players must pay close attention to who the defenders are, to score the teams in possession must make 6 passes before losing possession. If they do this, both teams on offense receive 1 point.



5. 2v2 with 2+2---In a grid 15x15 yards, each team has two players in the grid and two on the outside, on opposite sides from each other. The teams score by either making six passes (with teammate inside the grid or support players) or by executing a 1-2 (wall pass) with a support player. After 3 minutes switch inside and outside players.

6. 5 Goal Game---4v4+2 in 35x40 yard grid. Five 2-yard goals are spread out throughout the grid. The plus 2 players are always on the attacking team. The teams score by passing through any of the goals to a teammate. Must receive with inside of foot, then outside, weak foot inside/outside are different expectations that can be put on the players. First team to 10 points wins. Players need to be able to see where the open goals are, and receive with a “picture” of what is around them. With this in mind, if the players are advanced enough, the player receiving through the goal must play 1 touch. Coach could require receiving player to perform a feint before touching ball.

7. 3v3 or 4v4 To Four Small Goals--- In a 30x30 yard grid, two teams attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The goals are three feet wide and setup near each corner. With three attackers the players now have the 1st attacker (ball) and 2nd attackers (support) and a triangle shape in attack, looking to change the point of attack away from pressure. The defending team now has the 1st defender (pressure), 2nd defender (cover), and 3rd defender (balance). This game can be played to lines, goals with keepers, four squares or targets.



8. Bread and Butter---Typical 4 vs. 4 but with an additional 4 players who stand on outside of field and can be used by either team as outlets (with only 2 touches). If a team gets scored upon, they become the team on the outside and the outside team plays on the field. Use approximately a 20x25 yard area. Stress correct technique, receiving sideways on, and facing where they wish to play. May restrict the players to 2/3 touch to force quicker decisions, and better body position before the ball arrives. Keep score and make the game competitive.

9. 6v6 team touch---Play a normal 6v6 game except for the fact that every player on a team must touch the ball before their team can score. This forces players to show for the ball, to communicate, and to spread out the field. Version 2: If players are advanced, you can enforce a 3 or 2 touch limit on players.

10. 8v8 dual sided goal---Using a 2-sided rebounder or by setting up a goal in which the goalie must protect both sides of the goal, play 8 against 8. Both teams can score from either side of the goal. If a goalie makes a save she just punts the ball out. Teams must learn to change the point of attack and must give support to each other and communicate constantly. This will help teach teams to make the field big when on offense and to try to compact the field on defense.

***** Every practice should include a scrimmage*****

US YOUTH SOCCER & MASS YOUTH SOCCER GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

Under 12's play 8 vs 8 (*including a goalkeeper*)

Field Size: 75 to 80 yds long X 50 yds wide

Ball: #4

NCSAA Guidelines for U14 Players:

NCSAA “Advanced Regional” license or Mass. Youth Soccer “E” or “D” Course Recommended for coaches.

Skill Development Goals:

U-14 Continue with all U-12 focal points

- Speed Dribbling in Traffic
- Ability to chip the ball
- Accurately play long passes
- Offensive/Defensive Heading
- Power/Accuracy Shooting
- Fakes in passing & receiving

Tactical Priorities

- Communication
- Basic Support Positions
- Receiving the Ball Away from Pressure
- Combination Play
- How and when to switch the point of attack
- Pressure vs Containing
- Proper 2 vs 2 roles
- Introduction to all roles in 3 vs 3
- Zone defense

Technical: The speed at which all the technical aspects of the game are executed as well as being able to perform under pressure becomes more important at this level. Skill training that includes speed of play and executing under pressure is crucial.

Functional: Players who show a strong inclination for a particular aspect of the game must now be trained and developed accordingly. Technical- functional training sessions become more evident throughout the course of this time period. For example, an activity which integrates crossing from the flank (outside mid-field player) to finishing on goal not only improves the technical development (repetition), but coordinates the function of the wide player with his / her forwards.

Tactical Introduction: 3-4-3. The 3-4-3 formation once again lends itself to the diamond shape; in this case 3 diamonds. All of the aforementioned dynamics continue to manifest themselves in this 11 a side formation. From a defensive standpoint, a more sophisticated zonal approach can and should be introduced.

General Notes to All Coaches

Parents

In the MYS guide to parents, the following expectations are given to parents:

1. **Encourage your child** as they play on the field. Your child looks to you for encouragement and approval. Let their coach provide the corrections and direction.
2. **Respect officials** and accept all their decisions as final.
3. **Support your child's coach, team and Melrose Youth Soccer** as a whole. Discuss issues about your child in a constructive manner with the coach at a mutually agreed upon time and never immediately prior to, during or after any game. Your coach is a volunteer and is giving of his/her time to teach and encourage your child. Be a help!

You as the coach can take advantage of parents as an excellent resource if you do several things:

- Indicate to parents that You are the coach by the fact that you are organized and have clear expectations for them and for their children. Create a handout at the beginning of the season that includes game and practice times. Let parents know about parking issues and where to look for rainout information (the MYS website).
- Get together with parents at the beginning of the season to go over your guidelines and to answer any questions they may have.
- Stick with your schedule, and plan your practice times to minimize wasted time. Practice time is precious, and it is difficult to expect parents and players to respect it if you don't set the example.
- Encourage and expect parents to remain positive and upbeat at all games. Parents may only cheer words of positive encouragement for all of the children and are not allowed to shout instructions. On game days, MYS expects parents to be situated on the opposite side of the field from the team bench.
- Include parents to help with the managerial aspects of running your team. Is there paper work associated with running the team? Is there a parent who can set up and maintain a website for the team? Can someone oversee car pooling and setting up phone / e-mail trees?
- Anoint someone as the team social director! Ice cream runs after games are fun! Maybe a team cook out! And the always fun end of the year pizza party for the players is always important to plan too!

Let your
parents know!
Check the
website for all
of the info they
need!

Library

Melrose Youth Soccer has given numerous books and videos on soccer to the Melrose Public Library in the past several years. Check them out – the list is large and keeps on growing!

Trophies

It is recommended that Melrose Youth Soccer coaches refrain from awarding trophies to its players. A more appropriate “reward” would be to host a pizza party or some type of social event that includes both players and parents. This community approach to “a job well done” heightens team bonding, builds parental support, and creates a long lasting memory of a fun time. “Awarding” trophies elicits that “feel good” emotion very briefly and generally speaking the trophy finds its way into the attic or basement only to collect dust. Memories created by fun and upbeat events are carried with all of us forever.

Technical Training

A recent English FA study has concluded that players who do not develop technically sound skills by the age of 14 are at serious risk of never fully developing them. It is with this in mind that all coaches conduct regular technical sessions and be particularly aware of the development, or lack thereof, of all their athletes. Especially as players develop, there is an urge to have players work on plays, but in the words of NCSAA regional director Giovanni Pacini, “without technique, you cannot have tactics.” Players are never too big to work on basics skills!

Practice to Game Ratio

A recent survey indicates that the average “practice to game ratio” which exists in the United States is approximately 2-1; meaning for every two practices there is one game. On average in Europe for example, the ratio is 5-1. Such a disparity obviously indicates one of the reasons why there are so many more talented players in Europe than in the US.

In order to effectively improve the on-field performance technically, functionally, and tactically, much more time must be devoted to effective training sessions. In simple educational terms, the more time that is devoted to quality study and preparation, the better one will perform when taking a test! Over a period of time, the student who maintains that regimen will ultimately show more significant improvement.

Given the constraints placed on field space that we see in MYS, it is crucial that we as coaches make every minute of practice count – having a plan is important, and setting up your practice so that one set of cones can serve for two or three games is a good idea to create flow in your practice. There is not much for now that we can do about our limited amount of practice time, but we can encourage players to practice outside of practice. Assign homework, and give rewards (gummies, anyone?) for players who come through for you.

Recommended Websites

Melrose Youth Soccer

Concord Carlisle Youth Soccer
National Soccer Coaches Association of America
United States Soccer Federation
American Youth Soccer Organization
FIFA
Women's Soccer World
Major League Soccer
New England Revolution
Soccer New England
US Futsal Federation

www.melroseyouthsoccer.net
www.ccysoccer.org/coachescorner.htm
www.nscaa.com
www.ussoccer.com
www.soccer.org
www.fifa.com
www.womensoccer.com
www.mlssnet.com
www.revolutionsoccer.com
www.soccernewengland.com
www.futsal.com

Equipment:

Eurosport
Sondico
Keeper Stop

www.soccer.com
www.sondicosoccer.com
www.keeperstop.com

Recommended Soccer TV

Fox Soccer Channel
GOL TV
Soccer TV Guide
ESPN Soccer

www.foxsoccer.com
www.goltv.tv
www.soccertv.com
www.soccernet.com