



Lower Island Soccer Association

Lower Island Soccer Association Coaching the Coaches

A district wide approach to coach and player development

Lower Island Soccer Association

Coaching the coaches

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Age appropriate coaching methods and why Children play

Ages of Soccer growth

Ages 4-9 Childhood

Technical repetition

Individual basic skills 1 ball 1 player

Lots of balance and coordination games

Free play-trial and error

Games of 3-6 a side, no scores kept

Fun and competitive games

Ages 10-14 Puberty

More combinations of play

Work on roles and responsibilities

Create a decision making environment

Psychologically positive with correction

Exercise focus on endurance

Games of 8-11 a side

Emphasis on performance not result

Ages 15-23 Adolescence

Tactical application of technical skills

Intense fitness now part of training

Focus on group and team tactics

Emphasis on speed, strength, stamina

11 a-side games

Concentrating on combination play

Coaching Activities Checklist

Are the activities enjoyable?

Are the activities organized?

Are the players involved in the activities?

Who is making the decisions?

Are the spaces used appropriately?

Is your feedback appropriate?

Does the activity relate to the game?

Characteristics of well selected games

Many opportunities to experiment and experience

Lots of safe turns

Broad range of abilities can be accommodated

Attainable and clearly defined goals

Clear purpose and progressions

Feedback is usually immediate and frequent- cause and effect

Errors are expected and forgiven

Provides an almost instant opportunity to try again: adjust, repeat and recover

No player is eliminated- either blatantly or subtly

Defining Success in Youth Soccer

Motives for Participation in Youth Sports 3900 grade 7-12 sampled

Boys

- To have fun
- To do something I am good at
- To improve my skills
- Excitement of competition
- To stay in shape

Girls

- To have fun
- To stay in shape
- To get exercise
- To improve my skills
- To do something I am good at

Why do they Play

Fun is pivotal

Skill development is more important than winning

Sports most rewarding challenges are those that lead to self-knowledge

Intrinsic rewards (confidence, self esteem) are more important than extrinsic rewards (trophies) in creating lifetime athletes

To have FUN and ENJOY participating in sport

LEARN new skills and improve existing skills

To stay active and be physically fit

Suggestions for parents and coaches

Be aware of why the children are there

Ask how you can help them achieve their goals

Make sure that **FUN** and **LEARNING** are the key components of practice.

Process: Outcome: Success

The process- how, why and when is far more important than the outcome.

The process of doing ones best is the key in achieving success.

Success is defined by doing your best

Short term measures of success in youth soccer

Fun - do they smile and laugh?

Fair Play - do they know right from wrong?

Laws of the game - are they respected

Health and Fitness – are they active

Friendships – are new ones created

Skills – are they learning new ones?

RETENTION – are they coming back?

Long term measure of success in youth soccer

Commitment – did you give your best?

Team roles – can they play in multiple positions

Leadership – can they take on leadership roles in the team?

Tactics – can they make their own decisions?

RETENTION – will they play as adults?

Allow them to fail and encourage them to keep going

Babe Ruth struck out 1333 times

Abraham Lincoln lost 6 state and national elections and failed in business twice

Michael Jordan was cut from his junior high basketball team

Dr Seuss's first book was rejected 23 times

Joe Montana was a back up QB on his high school team

A new approach

We must change our thinking when evaluating young athletes:

Instead of thinking "this child doesn't have it" we should be thinking "this child needs more time"

Everyone will surprise you if you give them enough time.

Section 2

How children learn skill

Three different styles of coaching

Coach centered coaching

Coaches similar to leaders-combine the power of their position with a leadership style

Coach can exploit power and take choice and control away from the athlete

Known as prescriptive or autocratic coaching

A Prescriptive Coach

Attempts to control athlete behavior in training and competition

Focus more on memorizing the appropriate responses rather than understanding or individual problem solving

Athletes viewed as commodities and become robotic in their thinking and actions

An Athlete Centered or Empowering coach

Athletes gain and take ownership of decision making, knowledge, and development

Provide a shared sense of belonging and learning

No matter what style is used, athletes respond better to supportive coaches rather than punitive coaches

Empowered Athletes move through 4 stages

Becoming self aware

Connecting and learning

Taking action

Contributing to their own learning

Primary Coaching Goals

Trust

Autonomy

Initiative

Trust

To reduce the fear of failure we need a consistency of approach

Provide a safe, secure environment-need familiarity within the practices

Autonomy

Independence-opportunity to make choices

Self governing-opportunity to meet challenges

Self-reliant-opportunity to make decisions

Self-determining-opportunity for interaction with others

The individual's identity begins to emerge and self control and responsibility begin to develop

Initiative

As a child becomes grounded in trust and autonomy, it becomes safe to assume more responsibility

Willingness to try new things

Willingness to participate, contribute and take risks

Perhaps take on a leadership role

What is skill?

Understanding the environmental features

Deciding what to do and where and when to do it

Produce energy and muscle activity to generate movements

Technique under pressure

Types of skill

Closed skill

Predictable environment

Given variables

Examples Gymnastic, Archery

Open

Unpredictable environment

Irregular variables

Soccer is an open skill game

Principles of practice

Learning vs. Performance in practice

Goal 1-performing well

Goal 2- learning

The goals must be compatible not in conflict

Styles of Practice

Blocked practice

Practicing one skill completely before moving onto the next touch

Drill style of approach where technique is repeated over and over with minimal interruption

Random practice

Order of task presentation is randomized

Various tasks are mixed across the practice period

Athlete does not practice the same task on two consecutive occasions

Drills versus game activities

Drills can be:

Static

Military

Lines

Seen as boring

No thought

Age inappropriate

Game/Activity

Dynamic

Unstructured

Free movement

Fun

Decision making

Age appropriate

Don't invest your identity in instant success-mistakes are a vital part of learning

Section 3

Developing a training session

The Canadian Soccer Association's 'Wellness to World Cup' document does an outstanding job of documenting game to training ratios along with information on the duration of a training session.

This section is more concerned on how to develop a training session. As a coach you will not make big improvements to your team and players during one session. Improvement comes over time from a series of well thought out practices. Children like and respond to structure, there is a reason why school starts and finishes each day at the same time, and as coaches we need to recognise this and plan our practices accordingly. In general there are two types of practices: a practice that is based around a **technique** leading to a skill, and a practice based around **tactics** leading to a small sided game

Each practice should involve the following components:

Technical practice

Warm up

Introduction of the technique in an unopposed phase to allow mastery of the technique

The introduction of pressure: either time and space, or physical pressure of an opponent to take the technique to a skill.

Small sided game with the focus on the application of the technique

Cool down and recap

Tactical practice

Warm up

Introduction of the tactical scheme without an opponent: This is called a walk through or sometimes referred to as shadowplay.

Repetition of the tactical scheme in a phase of play: a controlled series of play against inferior numbers

Small sided game with the focus on the tactical scheme

Cool down and recap

Of course, not every practice will follow the same routine, however if you are aiming for success you must have a plan and stick to that plan as often as possible.

The only way to become a better coach is to work with players and interact with other coaches and seek out their feedback and opinions. Soccer, like most games, is a matter of opinion so as a coach you should develop one.

There are many things that make up a good coach, certification, playing experience, coaching experience and a good track record of developing players and improving teams. None of these attributes are more important than the other: coaching is, to quote Anson Dorrance of the University of North Carolina, stealing best practices. Take others ideas and adapt them to your ideas.

The more coaches you see and the more games you watch the better you will become. If you only think soccer when you come to the field you are doing your players a disservice and you should let someone else take the coaching reigns

Section 4

Game management, match ups, substitutions, half time, post game recap

Match ups

During the early part of the game you should be looking at the match ups around the field and looking for mismatches. There are three types of mismatches in youth soccer, **speed, height** and **general physical** mismatches. The most important match up to fix is the one of speed.

If you have a player who is out gunned in terms of **speed** then you will need to make some adjustments as this will be a problem in open play. Over time you will have an opportunity to work with your players in practice on dealing with a faster opponent. Game day is not that time.

A **height** mismatch is a problem that will show itself in corners and when you are defending high balls. In general heading is a weakness in the game in Canada so you will probably get away with this type of mismatch for a while, however as the players get older the mismatch of height becomes more of an issue.

The last mismatch is seen a lot during the ages of U12 to U15. Growth spurts kick in at different times for different children and at times it is not uncommon to see players playing in the same age group that are anywhere from 12-26 inches taller and close to twice the body weight of their opponent. In this situation you must address this mismatch of **general physical ability** immediately as you are putting your smaller player in harms way. They want to compete but at the moment it's not a level playing field. In time they will grow and will be able to compete. If they get hurt then they may not come back.

As a coach your job is to look for mis- matches and either take advantage of them or make changes to nullify them. It is also your job, and only real responsibility, to provide a safe and secure environment for your players

Substitutions

As you get to know your team over the course of a season you may find that your substitutions begin to follow a pattern with players of similar abilities replacing each other. Line changes are discouraged as they stop the flow of the game and show little thought. In youth soccer here are a number of reasons to substitute a player

Equalise playing time where minimum requirements are enforced

Injury

Tactical change

Change of formation

Mismatches-to create one or nullify one.

Half time

Half time is an opportunity to make some changes and give the players some constructive feedback.

Here is a recommendation on how to manage half time manage half time.

Give them 2 minutes to get in to the bench area and get a drink

Ask about injuries

Make your personnel changes before you talk about the upcoming half. If you give them the plan and then make changes you run the risk of the players who where on the bench not paying full attention.

Give them **THREE** pieces of information, anymore than three will overload them.

Finish on a positive

Post game recap

Never in the immediate aftermath of the game: You will still be too wrapped up in the game to make any valid comments and run the risk of saying something to the group or an individual that you may regret later.

The time to recap is during the next training session which should be 48 hours after your game, this will give you the time you need to look back at the game and get a more balanced view of the proceedings.

A game is just a snapshot of the days actions, when you win you probably aren't that good and if you lose you probably aren't that bad! It's just how it was on the day; if you remember that and pass that mantra onto the players you will be able to deliver your feedback in a balanced manner.

In the recap, try to identify two things that the team can do better and three things that the team did well. If the things that you need to do better keep repeating themselves then you must address these things in practice.

When delivering feedback to players, avoid looking at single game traits and look for patterns, positive and negative in their play.

If something happens **once** it's just an **isolated action**

If it happens **twice** it could be a **coincidence**

If it happens **three times** it's a **pattern**

Once you see a pattern being established if it is negative then it must be addressed in practice. If it's a positive then build on that with the player or team and make it strength of the team or individual.

Section 5

4v4 soccer U7 and U8

In 4v4 soccer the game should be about the players having plenty of opportunities to run and kick the ball. There are no tactics involved in this game as the players do not yet recognise the concept of TEAM play.

Practices should include many similar, but slightly different, games as the children want to PLAY games.

In terms of the shape of the team you should try to encourage them to move together as a group and not worry about positions. If they can move up and down the field as a group they will get more opportunities to kick the ball and, more importantly, plenty of exercise.

In terms of the shape of the team, they should be encouraged to make a diamond whenever possible; this shape offers support in front and behind the ball plus one other option. These are concepts that the players don't fully understand yet, but will in time become critical to their development

There are many internet based resources that offer support to coaches in these age groups and some of them are listed in section 7

Section 6

6v6 soccer U9 and U10

6 a side soccer has one major downfall in Canada. Coaches more familiar with hockey use the hockey formation and always keep two players back. This can be frustrating for the two players who have to stay back as they are disconnected from the rest of their team.

Some coaches will try to use a different series of formations to introduce the midfield area to the game, playing in a 2-1-2 or 2-2-1 formation. Both of these are valid formations however it is debateable as to whether adding the midfield position is of any benefit. The keys to players enjoying 6-a-side soccer are the same as 4-a-side soccer, lots of opportunities for kicking the ball and lots of running and movement.

It is also worth considering following on from the 4v4 model and asking the team to mover together as a group so that they get plenty of exercise and are able to attempt to connect passes to team mates when they have the ball. There are many internet based resources that offer support to coaches in these age groups and some of them are listed in section 9.

Section 7

8v8 soccer U11 and U12

The 8v8 game starts to look like the full size game, some passing will occur and some tactical elements will show up in the games. The games should now be an extension of the practice and as a coach you should be setting attainable and realistic goals for your team during the games, for example, encouraging players to try to take on their opponent a set number of times, encouraging them to make forward passes to a team mate, encouraging them to run with the ball into the opponents half a certain number of times each game.

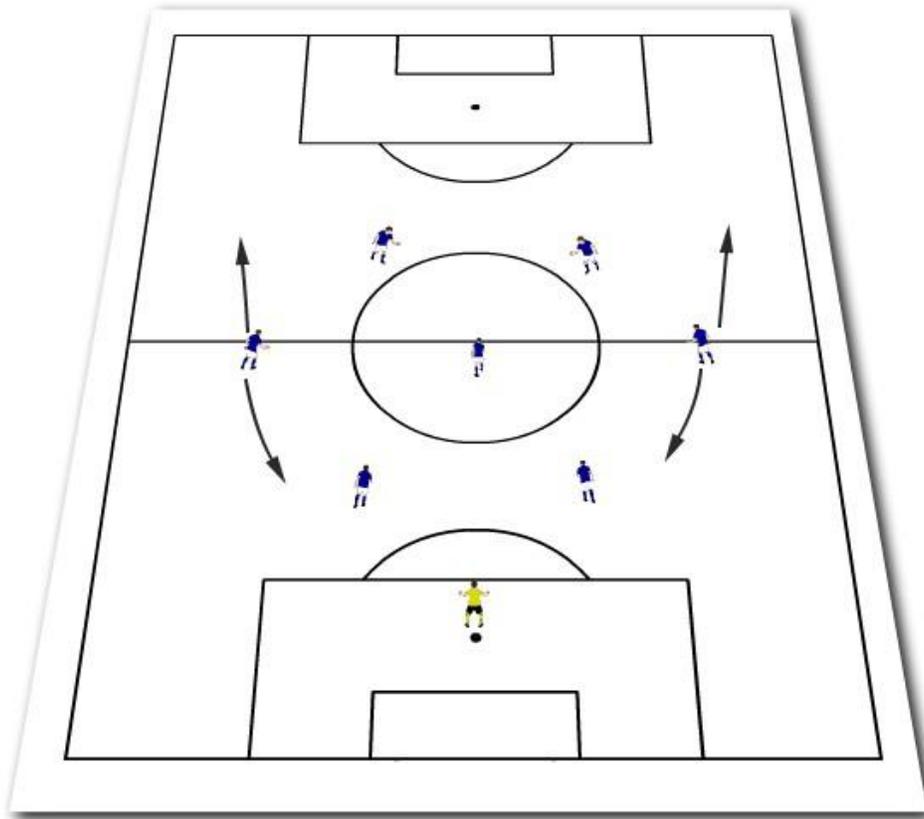
In terms of formations there are 4 basic schemes for 8-a-side soccer

2-3-2 formation

2-4-1 formation flat across the midfield

2-4-1 formation with a diamond in midfield

3-2-2 formation



Formation with two defenders, three midfielders and two strikers, 2-3-2

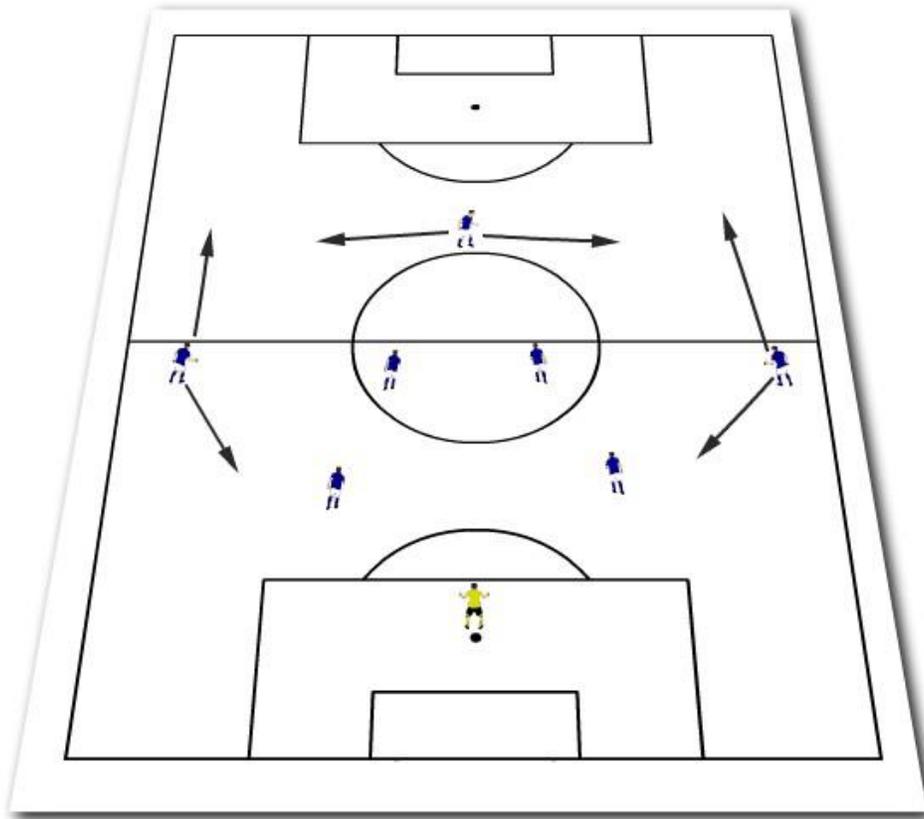
Encourage strikers to work together as a pair and not get isolated.

Work with two defenders on maintaining pressure on the ball and offering cover to each other.

The central midfield player acts as a holding player and allows wide players to attack with the ball.

When out of possession ask wide midfielders to drop down the field to offer support to defenders.

This formation is physically demanding on the wide midfielders.



Formation of two defenders, four midfielders playing 'flat' and two strikers, 2-4-1.

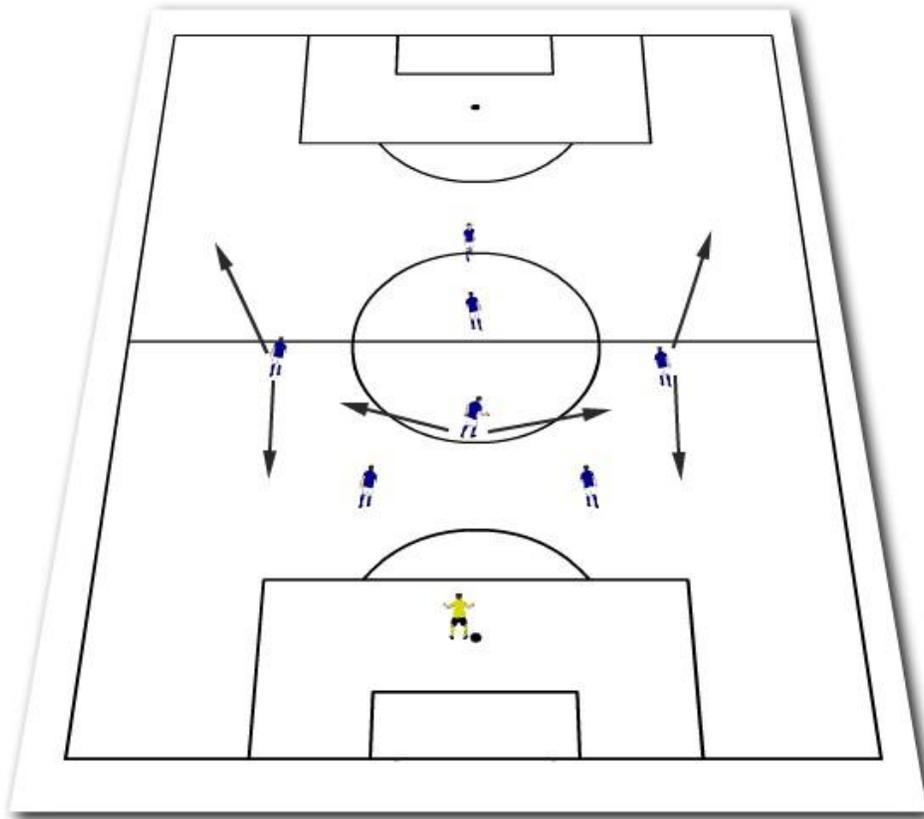
Encourage the target player to be mobile across the field and ask the midfielders to support them whenever possible.

This formation will introduce the midfielders to playing in a group of 4 across the field which is common in the 11-a-side game.

Wide players will need to be mobile to support the attacker in possession and the defenders when under pressure.

This formation can also force the defenders to play man to man which will help them develop as defenders.

Encourage the team to find their 'team shape' when out of possession.



Formation of two defenders, four midfielders playing 'in a diamond' and one striker, 2-4-1

The wide midfielders in the diamond start from a narrower position then when playing flat. Encourage the midfielder at the top of the diamond to get as close to the striker as possible when the ball is moving.

This formation will introduce the midfielders to playing in a group of 4 across the field which is common in the 11-a-side game.

Wide players will need to be mobile to support the attacker in possession and the defenders when under pressure.

This formation can also force the defenders to play man to man which will help them develop as defenders.

Encourage the team to find its shape when out of possession.



Formation of three defenders, two midfielders and two strikers, 3-2-2.

Encourage strikers to play together as a pair and not to get too far apart
Ask midfielders to take up advanced positions to support the two strikers whenever possible, as the three defenders will provide adequate cover.

Encourage a defender to go forward into midfield to offer support to the midfielders when in possession.

This formation does not offer a great deal of width in attack as the midfielders and strikers will end to play more centrally. This can be compensated for by encouraging the wide defenders to move forward with the ball whenever possible.

Section 8

Communication

Communication is our biggest challenge as more often than not we fail to provide clear channels of communication and then our message either doesn't get through or is interpreted incorrectly.

There are four things that you should do when setting up your communication systems with your team.

Set up a new separate email address for soccer.

Make sure that all logistical issues, travel, practice, uniforms etc are dealt with by the manager or team administrator

Do not reply to emails regarding the weekend's activities for a period of between 24-48 hours after the game. Turn on the out of office function so that people know you have received the email and will reply in due course. This gives you time to cool off and deal with this issue at hand in the proper manner, and also allows the parent time to cool off.

Always try to steer any communications towards a face to face resolution.

Communication with other coaches

From The NCCP Code of Ethics

“Behaving with integrity means that coaches are expected to be honest, sincere, and honourable in their relationships with others. Acting on these values is possible when coaches have a high degree of self awareness and the ability to reflect critically on how their views and opinions influence how they interact with others.”

Although the coach is your opponent today, you are working together for the good of the game. If your players see you show disrespect to the oppositions coach they will see that as acceptable behaviour.

Regardless of the outcome of the game we must show respect for our fellow coaches, even if it is a simple handshake at the end of the game.

Communication with players

Praise the group, correct in private!

All players want feedback and will act on this feedback as long as it is delivered correctly.

Never ever give a player feedback in a group setting

It is always important to remain honest and balanced in your interactions with the players. They will respect that from you and if you gain their trust and respect you will have a much greater impact on them than you can imagine. However, if you are full of false praise or over the top criticism you will lose the respect of the player and very likely never win it back.

From the NCCP Code of Ethics

“The principle of respect for athletes challenges coaches to act in a manner respectful of the dignity of those involved in sport. This principle is based on the basic assumption that each person has value and is worthy of respect.

Acting with respect for participants means that coach’s:

Do not make some participants feel more or less worthy as persons than others, on the basis of gender, race, place of origin, athletic potential, colour, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs, socio-economic status, marital status, age, or any other conditions.

Have a responsibility to respect and promote the rights of all participants. This is accomplished by establishing and following procedures for confidentiality (right to privacy), informed participation and shared decision-making (right to self-determination - athletes' rights), and fair and reasonable treatment (right to procedural fairness). Coaches have a special responsibility to respect and promote the rights of participants who are vulnerable or in dependent positions, and therefore less able to protect their own rights.

Interact with others in a manner that enables all participants in sport to maintain their dignity.

Build mutual support among fellow coaches, officials, athletes, and their family members”.

Communication with parents

As previously stated it's important to take control of the communication between you and the parent. This will give you the opportunity to bring any conflict to an amicable resolution. At the end of the day parents in general want two things: the best for their child and an opportunity to communicate with the coach if they have a concern. As a coach you share the first goal.

It's important to allow parents to air their concerns and in my experience it is an opportunity for you to connect with the parents and put their mind at ease. By giving the parent a voice you are giving them a sense of ownership in the team, this will give a better chance of dealing with any concerns.

The key to managing parental issues is to be honest with your opinions and have a consistent approach when dealing with players and parents, making promises that you can't keep will only lead to more problems down the road

Communication with officials

Simply put in a single word, **DON'T**

We cannot play a game without an official and the abuse of officials is reaching a critical point. Once the game starts unless the officials engage with you, there is no need for you to engage with them. The procedure for substitutions is clear and at no other time should you be in communication with the officials unless they initiate the conversation.

Section 9

Web based Resources

There are no drills attached to this document. There are many books and websites that can be accessed by the coach that will satisfy the needs of a lesson plan.

Here are a number of websites that can be used to help you get practice ideas. This is just a sample of what is available via the internet. Some of these websites require a small subscription and some of them offer the information for free.

www.bcsoccer.net for information on the CSA's Long Term Player Development program

www.scoutingsolutions.com

Registration for this on line tool is available through membership of the Lower island Soccer Coaches Association (LISCA)

This site has a graphics builder that allows you to build your own practices. T also allows you to copy and edit other practices on the site.

www.betersoccercoaching.com

www.usyouthsoccer.org

The United States Youth Soccer Association offers a program called Coaches Connection. This is an excellent resource and offers practices for all ages from U6 to U18. The cost of this program is approximately \$30 per year.

www.thestandardsproject.org

www.soccerhelp.com

www.soccer-for-parents.com

www.soccerpracticebooks.com

www.soccerdrillbook.com

www.coaching-youth-soccer-for-success.com

www.eteamz.com/soccer/pills/jpill.htm excellent resource from Jeff Pill

www.canadiansportforlife.ca

www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/manual/

www.gamesforsoccer.com many practices for U6 to U8 players

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Other sources

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NCCP Code of Ethics.

United States Youth Soccer Association Vision document, "How Do We Measure Success"

This document is not a 'magic bullet' or a stand alone reference. It is meant to compliment the many resources that are available to coaches. These are not our original ideas they are our opinions that have been developed through our experiences. We encourage you to use these ideas and tailor them to your style of coaching. We hope that you will find the information in this document helpful to you as a coach.

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