

Part 3

Coaching U9/U10

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Part 3 - U9/U10 Age Group Guide

Coaching the Preteen Age Groups – U5 to U12¹

Coaching the preteen age groups may be the most important coaching position in youth soccer. These are formative years for children, and this stage is the best opportunity to instill a love for the game within them. A true passion for soccer keeps people in the game for a lifetime and develops champions. Soccer clubs must build a positive player-first culture. The soccer environment for these children needs to follow the creed of foremost building the player and then the team.

The philosophy of coaching youth soccer places great importance on age appropriate activities and creating a child-centered learning environment. Many great players have traced personal success to the coaching received at an early age. It is hoped that the youth soccer coach will one day look back with pride at the opportunities created for learning and enjoyment. A supportive, child-centered, positive experience in youth soccer is vital to the growth of the game.

Soccer is all about enjoyment for children. The experience can be summed up in the four messages of Youth Soccer Month – Fun, Family, Fitness and Friendship.

- **Fun** – Whether recreational or competitive in nature, involvement in soccer is easy, affordable and rewarding.
- **Family** – Playing soccer ties families together as schedules, vacations and family time are coordinated.
- **Friendship** – The relationships generated through playing soccer extend beyond the field.
- **Fitness** – The health and fitness (physical, psychological and social) benefits of playing soccer.

The single most important goal a coach of young players can have is to instill a passion for the game. It is passion that keeps a player in the game for a lifetime. It is passion that motivates many players to do that extra bit of practice to become a top notch player. It is our shared passion for the game that impels us to become coaches, referees, team managers or all of those.

The coach's efforts put into motion a relationship with soccer for children, which, through the help of countless others, will provide the foundation for players to experience the joy of participation throughout their life.

The most effective player development experience for our pre-teen players applies a player-centered approach to coaching that uses the tools of age appropriate, game-like activities. Learning the game is accelerated for the children when the coach uses guided discovery at proper times in a training session and occasionally in a match. Coaches who use the following Principles of Coaching will be the most effective teachers of the game. The principles of youth coaching are guidelines developed as a foundation or a sounding board to assess the appropriateness of an activity or training session. The following six principles are presented so that youth players receive a healthy and positive youth soccer experience.

¹ Snow, Sam. US Youth Soccer Player Development Model, February 2012, pg. 52-53.

The U9/U10 Age Group

The U9/U10 age group marks a significant period of growth as players begin to experience significant physical and cognitive growth. Physically, players typically experience substantial gains in muscle mass during this stage, resulting in considerable gains in strength and power. This is coupled with increases in speed of execution, endurance, and explosive power. As players enter U9/U10, they are beginning to master basic aspects of movement skills, including the ability to really control the ball with their feet while moving. Core technical abilities and tactical awareness begin to emerge and players begin to anticipate what might happen next during a game (aka think in advance of the ball). This is a fertile time for learning as players are beginning to develop self-awareness and are able to identify what they know and what they do not yet know.²

Coaches must encourage technical development above all else – ensuring that players are focused on developing the fast footwork which will lay the pathway for quick and effective passing, tactical execution, and timing down the line. While coaches can likely achieve victories in games by focusing on passing at this age, if they do so they will discover that by the U12 and U14 age groups, other teams will have also mastered passing – minimizing any advantage the team once had and without the core foot skills, the players will have a great deal of trouble competing.

If there is one skill that we want players to develop it is their foot skills. Few American players have the ability to take on opponents 1v1 and consistently win the battle. Imagine the value a player with that ability would have at the higher levels – it would be an amazing asset to any team.

Coaches who leave developing fast footwork to the older age levels – when players are closed down faster and have less time to think on the ball will discover that it has become a far more challenging, if not impossible, task. For those reasons, it is better for long term player development for coaches to place serious emphasis on foot skills, including dribbling, and to consistently encourage players to take opponents on 1v1 rather than pass the ball during U9/U10 years.

U9/U10 - An Overview

The Learning to Train Stage – US Youth Soccer Player Development Model³

The learning to train stage covers ages 8 to 12. The objective is to learn all of the fundamental soccer skills, building overall sports skills.

The Start of Us

In this stage, children gradually begin to change from being self-centered to self-critical and develop the need for group games. This is a flux phase in a youngster's soccer career. The motivation to learn basic skills is very high at this age. The game itself should be central to all technical training. 11v11 is too sophisticated and complicated for young players. Small-sided games, which provide the right amount of pressure for the child's level of development, are more appropriate.

Physiologically the U9/U10 players are children not adolescents. In fact peak athletic performance

² Fleck, Thomas, et al. The Official US Youth Soccer Coaching Manual. US Youth Soccer. 2008.

³ Snow, Sam. US Youth Soccer Player Development Model, February 2012, pg. 64-69.

takes place in early adulthood. So for 10 year olds, there is still a low ceiling to athletic performance. The adult concept of work rate is driven by the desire to win. Children like to win, but playing is more important. They are engrossed in the process of play, not the outcome. Still coaches and parents should encourage children to try their best. Ten year olds can understand the broad idea of effort, but the details are foggy. They continue to equate effort with performance regardless of the outcome. The ability of players to understand and execute consistent play with a good work rate will grow over many years. These traits should be gradually nurtured by coaches and parents.

An emphasis needs to be placed on skill development at this age while using a games-based approach. Practice individual skills within individual and small group tactics. Training sessions should include fun skill building activities with some teaching of technique. When coaching players in this age group, the coach's role expands from one of facilitating to being a teacher of technique and game application. However, playing at this age is still very important, so emphasis should shift toward enjoyable skill development. These players start to move from the *how* (technique) to *when, where, with whom* and *against whom* (skill – tactics). Training sessions should still focus on small-sided games so players have the opportunity to recognize the pictures presented by the game. These objectives are best achieved through a games-based approach to learning soccer. (A game centered focus with an emphasis on player decisions and individual readiness. The coach is the facilitator and creator of soccer problem situations posing questions on time, space and tactical risk/safety.)

U9/U10 is the time to introduce basic combination play, wall passes and take-overs while concentrating on basic skills in cooperative play; i.e., passing, receiving, shooting. Remember players are being coached, not skills. The key motivator in soccer is the ball; use it as much as possible in training sessions. It is very important that warm-up sessions are well handled, as this is the time when the coach takes control and sets the tone. Get into action as soon as possible by having the team work at the outset without an involved and complicated explanation. The teaching of ball skills needs to be accomplished through games. The repetition of technique is undertaken through fun games and dynamic activities. Around age 10, visual acuity takes on an adult pattern and the ability to visually a moving object in the air is developing more. This is one reason that the goalkeeper position is not introduced into youth soccer until now. Receiving a bouncing ball and a ball in the air that is head height or lower is happening on purpose now as well.

For U9/U10's, continue to build the player before the team. Stress individual development over team building. Remember, for the players, fun and enjoyment through play are still critically important. Because children at this age intentionally play in small groups, there can be too much emphasis on results as opposed to performance. Some tactical ideas are emerging in their game, but their thoughts tend to be vague. This growing capability is one aspect of the flux phase. Often the adults involved with this age group see these abilities appear in matches and leap to expecting adult team-like performance when in fact the children are still learning how to play.

Continue to lace the principles of play into activities with the U9/U10 age group. In particular, they will begin to comprehend width and depth, but their execution of it will be inconsistent. Time and space relationships are just now budding. This emerging awareness of space is aided by showing the players the triangle and diamond shapes in the game. The triangle shape is of particular importance in building on the idea of support (pairs) from the U7/U8 age group. The large triangle (width and depth) is support on the attack and the smaller triangle (concentration) is support when defending. With depth, stretching out the opposition may occur. Players should be encouraged and praised for playing on both sides of the ball, which is attacking and defending. Keep in mind that the

shape of the triangle changes with passing lanes adjusting in length and angle to support the ball. This constant adjustment is crucial in group play.

All players should recover to help defend after losing possession of the ball. Similarly, all players should look to contribute to every attacking play, even when playing a position in the back line. The position of goalkeeper is new to their soccer experience at U9/U10. Take time at training now and then to teach basic goalkeeper skills to all of the players. In training sessions, have the players take turns playing in goal. Two training sessions per month should be devoted to goalkeeping. Over the course of the soccer year, every player must have the opportunity to play in goal. The players won't know what their best position may be once they are teenagers unless they are given the chance to try them all.

There are now two lines in the team at U9/U10: goalkeeper plus backs and forwards. While the field player positions could be manipulated in a lineup, it is wise to put the players in positions where it is easy for them to execute the principles of play. Most crucial in the team formation is the ability of the players to form triangles. US Youth Soccer recommends two simple formations at this age: 3-2 or 2-3. These formations are easy to conceptualize for children 8 to 10 years old. Getting into a group shape at dead ball situations is also possible at this age with an emphasis at goal kicks and throw-ins.

General Characteristics of the U9/U10 Age Groups

- Lengthened attention span - they are still in motion, but not as busy, only holding still long enough for a short explanation
- More inclined toward wanting to play rather than being told to play
- Psychologically becoming slightly more firm and confident
- Some are becoming serious about their play
- Team oriented – prefer team type balls and equipment. Enjoy the uniforms and team association.
- Boys and girls beginning to develop separately
- Developing the pace factor – thinking ahead
- Gross and small motor skills becoming much more refined

While using game-like activities, which allow for trial and error, expose the children to the components of the game.

“Play builds imagination. Play with other children teaches skills of problem solving and cooperation. A child who learns to play alone will never be lonely. Play teaches the ability to tolerate frustration and it teaches the all-important ability to fail. Play generates joy and allows the experience of flow.”⁴
- Dr. Edward M. Hallowell, child and adult psychiatrist, ADD/ADHD

These players will demonstrate increased self-responsibility, so they should be given, to a reasonable extent, partial responsibility for their preparation at training sessions and matches. They are very capable of assuming this responsibility when adults step aside and let it happen. Now

⁴Flow is that period of time in which the activity matches your ability. Players can experience flow in almost any activity if these two factors are present and evenly balanced. The flow concept is critical for effective soccer training.

they can initiate play on their own, which leads to learning through self-discovery and self-expression. They do enjoy and benefit from competition, so all training activities should have objectives and/or a method of scoring. They will intentionally play in groups, although individualism is still the core of their game. Use cooperative games and activities in training sessions to further instill a team mentality.

U9/U10 Coach Qualities for Success: Sensitive teacher, patient, facilitator, enthusiastic, imaginative, ability to demonstrate, understands technique and preferably a youthful outlook.

Coaching U9/U10: Team Identity – *US Youth Soccer’s The Coaching Manual*⁵

One Ball – Four Players

Both boys and girls are beginning to demonstrate an improved ability and a mastery of some aspects of basic locomotor, nonlocomotor, and manipulative skills (the ability to control objects, either directly through hands and feet, or indirectly with an implement such as a tennis racket).

They have also begun to develop basic technical abilities to play soccer and their cognitive understanding of tactics and strategies is evolving. They are beginning to demonstrate an ability to think in advance of the ball (anticipation). Formal schooling plays an increasingly important role in the development of children’s thinking. They will demonstrate a very basic form of self-awareness; of realizing what they know and what they don’t know

Psychomotor

During this period, children gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance, and power. Strength is related to body size and muscle mass. During childhood and adolescence, boys tend to have greater strength, especially in the trunk and upper body when compared to girls; however, leg strength differences are minimal.

Motor performance is most often measured by a variety of motor tasks that require speed, balance, flexibility, explosive strength and muscular endurance. Children are in a linear growth mode (from head to toe) that peaks with a growth spurt at adolescence. Some children will grow faster than others. Height can approach 5 feet and weight can reach 80 pounds or more.

Significant physical differences appear between genders from 10 to 11 years of age and onward.

Cognitive

There are significant changes in a child’s memory ability in nine and 10 year olds, particularly in deliberate recall memory. By the age of 11 or 12 their deliberate recall memory is similar to an adult’s. They have the ability to remember and follow more complex instructions, which enables them to solve higher-level problems. Improvements in memory reflect a child’s increasing fund of knowledge and experience. Children begin to move from Piaget’s 3rd period of cognitive development (concrete operations) to the 4th stage of cognitive development (formal operations). Children in this age group develop an ability to focus longer and stay “on task.” They begin to sequence thought and actions and they begin to think in advance of, or anticipate, the ball. They will start recognizing when and where to move with and without the ball and they begin to develop a sense of pace. Young soccer players must be observed and assessed in authentic game related activities that foster learning in all three identified domains—psychomotor, cognitive and psychosocial.

⁵ Fleck, Thomas, et al. The Official US Youth Soccer Coaching Manual. US Youth Soccer. 2008.

Psychosocial

Players begin to initiate play on their own and are likely to want to play rather than to be reminded that it is time to go to soccer practice. Many players are becoming more serious about their play and with whom they play. Peer group attachment and the pressure generated by peers become significant. There is a need to belong and the association with a team becomes increasingly more important. They will develop a group of friends; there is great social need to interact. Adults outside of the immediate family (most notably the coach) begin to take on added significance. Gender differences become more apparent. Over 76% of girls aged 9-12 cited "FUN" as the primary reason to be physically active (Jaffe & Manzer, 1992).

U9/U10 Skill Development

Components of the Game in Priority Order

1 st Priority ---	Technical
2 nd Priority ---	Psychosocial
3 rd Priority ---	Physical
4 th Priority ---	Tactical

For the U9/U10 age group, the priorities for player development are 1st – Technical, 2nd – Psychosocial, 3rd – Physical, 4th – Tactical. Thus, the large majority of time should be spent focused on activities that allow players to build their technical skills. Technical skills should be reinforced constantly, and players should have ample opportunity to get touches on the ball at every practice. Ball skills and creativity with the ball are essential skills to develop at this age. Coaches should ensure that players train using both feet and encourage them to work to strengthen their non-dominant foot alongside their dominant one.

Building on the foundation during the U7/U8 years, players' newfound ability to control the ball will allow them to be increasingly competent manipulating the ball in game like situations. Each practice should include a warm up that focuses on controlling the movement of the ball with the feet, activities that require players to take on opponents in 1v1 situations, and keeping the head up while dribbling, before receiving a pass, and when passing. 1v1 activities are of tremendous value in this age group and players must be encouraged to take risks, engage in 1v1 attempts to use foot skills to get past opponents while maintaining possession. Every training session should include activities that challenge players to take on 1v1 and 2v1 attacking and defending situations. These are essential to player development and are among the most valuable activities for players at this age. While it can be frustrating for a coach to watch players consistently turn over the ball in a 1v1 or 2v2, this is the bedrock of soccer, and the way players learn to effectively respond to these situations is through trial and error. While some coaching is of course important, a player's individual experience confronting these situations is what will lead him to develop understanding of how to best respond to them in the future. Thus, it is critical that coaches understand that this is a long term process, and to continue to utilize activities that require players to face the challenges posed by 1v1 and 2v1 situations consistently throughout the U9 and U10 years.

There will be many instances where creating an environment that fosters player development does not line up with winning a game. This is ok. The key at this age is not to rack up wins, but instead to build a solid foundation from which a player can develop to her full potential. A great example of this is the importance of encouraging players to take on opponents 1v1 using their foot skills. Initially, more often than not, this will result in a turnover. Many coaches respond to this by encouraging players to pass the ball when they experience pressure. While passing is important, if a player does not develop the ability to take on a defender 1v1 using their foot skills, they will have difficulty playing at the higher levels in future years. For the long-term benefit of the player, it is essential that the coach encourage players to take on the defender in a 1v1 situation, and praise the player for the effort, even if the result is not ideal.

Coaches must be exceptionally careful to ensure that the message he is relaying verbally to a player is aligned with the message he is relaying with his actions. U9/U10 players are acutely more aware of conflicting messages from coaches, and are likely to disengage if they believe the coach is not pleased with their creativity. Perhaps more than anything else, it is essential that players develop the confidence to take risks trying out new skills during games and practices during the U9/U10 years. Far too often, players at the U9/U10 age withdraw from trying out new skills as they become self-conscious and concerned about making mistakes. It's therefore critical that the coach takes a proactive approach in encouraging and praising players for trying out new skills, taking opponents on 1v1, and engaging players in a manner that creates an environment where players feel safe to be creative and try out their new technical skills.

Coaching U9/U10 Technical Skills

Introduction

Technical skills must be the foundation of all U9/U10 training sessions. This is the age where players are best prepared to expand their technical abilities and create muscle memory that will lay the foundation for their technical development as a player. During the U11 year, players often experience an awkward period of growth that frequently results in a temporary loss of coordination as the brain works to rebuild proprioceptive awareness to respond to the physical changes that correspond with physical changes. If a sound technical foundation is formed during the U9/U10 years, players will emerge from U11 with the critical technical skills that will allow them to be successful at U12 and beyond. It is essential that coaches ensure that players practice technical skills with both feet to allow them to expand effectiveness on the field. Players who are able to perform fakes and turns with both feet, shoot with both feet, and pass with both feet, have a significantly greater degree of efficacy as players. Coaches must emphasize repetition, and provide players with lots of opportunities to perform the skills, through game-like activities during training sessions.

Discussion of Technical Skills & the U9/U10 Age Group

There are a number of new technical skills that should be learned by players during the U9/U10 years. Reinforcement of the technical skills introduced in prior age groups is also essential. Particular emphasis should be placed on passing and receiving, running with the ball, dribbling,

turning, shooting, ball control, and 1v1 attacking during this phase of development.⁶ By the end of the U9/U10 years, players should have a considerable number of technical skills at their disposal in any given situation. Players should be working to combine technical skills in order to

U9/U10 New Target Technical Skills	
Receiving	Shooting - On the Ground ⁷
A Ball on the Ground - Cushion	Instep drive
Outside of Foot	Chip
Instep	Passing - On the Ground ⁷
A Ball off the Bounce - Cushion	Instep Pass
Inside of foot	Crossing
Instep	Dribbling
Outside of foot	Turns
A Ball off the Bounce - Wedge	Fakes
Sole of foot	
Inside of foot	
Outside of foot	

Receiving Skills

Overview of Receiving⁸

Controlling the ball is the glue that keeps the team cohesive. When this technique is strong throughout a team then ball possession becomes a tactical reality. Without good receiving techniques a player is reduced to a kick and run style of play.

These techniques need to be shown first stationary and then redirecting the ball.

When coaching receiving ground balls, it is important to show receiving to redirect the ball, as follows:

- With inside of the foot to outside of the body
- With the inside of the foot across the body
- With the inside of the foot turn around (180°)
- With the outside of the foot to outside of the body
- With the outside of the foot across the body
- With the outside of the foot turn around (180°)
- With the inside of the foot and behind the standing leg

⁶ Perez, Javier. U.S. Soccer Curriculum. U.S. Soccer Federation. 2011. p. 48-49.

⁷ Note: "On the ground" refers to the location of the ball in the second before the shot is taken. Once contact between the foot and the ball is made, the ball may leave the ground, though it is important that players learn to cross the ball low to the ground, and to shoot the ball low to the bottom corners of the net.

⁸ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.31-32.

Receiving the Ball on the Ground – Cushion – Outside of Foot

Receiving the ball with the outside of the foot is a key skill as it provides players a great deal of control to receive a ball moving it away from pressure. Players should be taught to receive the ball by cushioning it, keeping a bit of laxity in the foot so that it does not bounce off the foot, but instead can be directed in the direction intended. When receiving the ball with the outside of the foot, players should typically be taught to use the outside of the foot to move the ball to the side that the foot is on. For example, if the player wishes to direct the ball to the left side of her body, she should use the outside of the left foot to control it and move it to the outside of the body – directing it directly laterally (west of the direction they are facing), or laterally with a slight forward or backward angle (northwest or southwest) depending on where the pressure (from the defender) is coming from. Players should be encouraged to practice this in fast paced settings that mirror a game.



IMAGE A

IMAGE B

IMAGE C

IMAGE D

⁹ Christie Rampone Soccer Tip #7 Receiving Outside of Foot. Jersey Mikes TV. 2012.



IMAGE E



IMAGE F

Key Coaching Points¹⁰

1. **Preparation:** feet somewhat less than shoulder width apart; knees gently bent for balance; arms out a little for balance; toes of the standing foot pointing forward; turn the toes of the receiving foot in so that the outside of the foot is facing the oncoming ball; extend the receiving foot slightly forward; watch the ball onto the receiving foot (See Images A & B)
2. **Contact:** with the outside area of the foot (turn the little toe down so that the outer edge of the instep makes contact with the ball); as the ball makes contact with the foot gently pull the leg backward to absorb the pace of the ball (See Images C, E, & F)
3. **Follow Through:** bring the receiving foot back to a point level with the ankle of the standing foot; eyes on the ball (See Image D)

Receiving the Ball on the Ground – Cushion – Instep

Receiving the ball on the ground with the instep gives the player the ability to control the ball directly in front of his body or in any forward facing direction. Players should be encouraged to work to “catch” the ball with the laces of their foot, as if it were an egg or a water balloon they want to avoid breaking. Help players to understand the importance of flexing the leg back at the knee to create the cushion that will allow them to cradle the ball and bring it to a controlled stop.

¹⁰ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

Key Coaching Points¹¹

1. **Preparation:** feet somewhat less than shoulder width apart; knees gently bent for balance; arms out a little for balance; toes of the standing foot pointing forward; toes of the receiving foot pointing down; ankle locked; extend the receiving foot slightly forward; watch the ball onto the receiving foot (See Images A & B)
2. **Contact:** with the instep (shoe laces) meet the ball; gently pull the leg backward at the knee joint to absorb the pace of the ball; keep the toes down and ankle locked (See Image C)
3. **Follow Through:** bring the receiving foot back just beyond the standing leg; eyes on the ball (See Image D)

Receiving a Bouncing Ball – Cushion – Inside of Foot

Receiving a bouncing ball with the inside of the foot, using a cushioning technique, is an essential skill as the ball will frequently not be rolling smoothly on the ground during a game. Players should be encouraged to try this skill out during game like practice activities. Beginning with a slight bounce and increasing to a greater degree of bouncing as the player develops. Receiving a bouncing ball is considerably more complex than receiving a ball on the ground. This is because the player must now track the ball in a three dimensional plane. It is essential that the coach ensure that the player cushions the ball and does not just allow it to ricochet off the foot. When receiving a ball using a cushion technique, the ball should come to a controlled stop in front of the player, allowing the player to make a controlled decision about whether to dribble, control then pass, or control than shoot. Players should be encouraged to take a touch to control the ball rather than booting it – which is detrimental to the development of solid receiving skills.

¹¹ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.



12

IMAGE A

IMAGE B

IMAGE C

IMAGE D



13

IMAGE E

IMAGE F

Key Coaching Points¹⁴

1. **Preparation:** move into the path of the ball; standing leg planted and the knee slightly bent; raise the receiving foot so that it is level with line A of the ball; knee of the receiving leg opened; toes of the receiving foot pointed out; ankle locked; eyes on the ball (See Image A)
2. **Contact:** as the ball makes contact with the arch of the foot area withdraw the foot smoothly to absorb the pace of the ball; bring back the entire leg moving from the hip until the receiving foot is perpendicular to the heel of the standing foot (See Images B, C, E & F)
3. **Follow Through:** once the ball is stopped then stand balanced on both feet (See Image D)

¹² US Youth Soccer Skills School. Receiving the Ball of the Bounce Using the Inside of the Foot. US Youth Soccer. 2011.

¹³ freekickerz.How to Control the Ball After a Pass/Cross - Football Tutorial. 2015.

¹⁴ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. PG. 35.

Receiving a Bouncing Ball – Cushion – Instep

The ability to cushion a bouncing ball using the instep allows a player to bring the ball under control quickly and directly in front of the player's body. This provides the player with the option to move left, right, forward, or backward immediately upon controlling the ball. Coaches should work with players to develop the feel for this, and may want to have players imagine that they are trying to catch an egg or water balloon on the foot to help them understand how to properly withdraw the foot as contact with the ball is made.



15

IMAGE A

IMAGE B

IMAGE C

IMAGE D



IMAGE E



IMAGE F

Key Coaching Points

1. **Preparation:** move into the path of the ball; standing leg planted and the knee slightly bent; raise the receiving foot so that the laces are aligned with line B of the ball; **knee** of the receiving leg **over** the ball; toes of the receiving foot pointed down; ankle locked; eyes on the ball (See Image A)
2. **Contact:** as the ball makes contact with the instep of the foot **withdraw the foot smoothly** to absorb the pace of the ball; bring back the lower leg moving from the knee until the receiving foot is perpendicular to the heel of the standing foot (See Images B, C, D, E, & F)
3. **Follow Through:** once the ball is stopped then stand **balanced** on both feet

¹⁵ freekickerz. How to Control the Ball After a Pass/Cross - Football Tutorial. 2015.

Receiving a Bouncing Ball – Cushion – Outside of Foot

All components of receiving with this part of the foot are the same as with the inside of the foot with the exception being that the outside of the foot is used to absorb motion of the ball as described under the discussion of receiving the ball on the ground with the outside of the foot.¹⁶



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D



IMAGE E

Key Coaching Points

1. **Preparation:** move into the path of the ball; standing leg planted and the knee slightly bent; raise the receiving foot so that it is level with line A (equator) of the ball; thigh of the receiving leg about parallel to the ground and in front of the body; turn the little toe down so that the outer edge of the instep makes contact with the ball (See Images A & B)
2. **Contact:** as the ball makes contact with the outside of the foot area withdraw the foot smoothly across the body to absorb the pace of the ball; bring back the entire leg moving from the hip until the receiving foot has crossed past the midline of the body and the standing foot; eyes on the ball (See Image C)

¹⁶ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. PG. 35.

3. **Follow Through:** once the ball is stopped then stand balanced on both feet (See Images D & E)

Receiving a Bouncing Ball – Wedge – Sole of Foot

The ability to receive a bouncing ball using the sole of the foot is critical as it allows for complete and immediate control of the ball by stopping it dead in its tracks. Unlike receiving in a cushion system, the wedge requires a player to use his or her foot to trap the ball between the foot and the ground. In this case, the player would be looking to trap the ball using the sole of the foot, trapping it between the sole and the ground. Players should be encouraged to practice this skill by dropping the ball and working to trap it, first with their dominant foot, and subsequently with their non-dominant foot.



IMAGE A

IMAGE B

IMAGE C

IMAGE D



IMAGE E

IMAGE F

IMAGE G

IMAGE H

17

Key Coaching Points¹⁸

1. **Preparation:** let the ball bounce or drop below mid-shin height; lift the controlling foot up over the ball; the knees should be bent on both legs for balance; arms out a little from the sides; eyes on the ball (See Images A & B)
2. **Contact:** gently press down on the top of the ball with the sole of the foot; the body weight must be on the standing leg (Images C & D)
3. **Follow Through:** once the ball is stopped then stand balanced on both feet (Image E)

Receiving a Bouncing Ball – Wedge – Inside of Foot

¹⁷ US Youth Soccer Skills School. Receiving the Ball of the Bounce Using the Inside of the Foot. US Youth Soccer. 2011.

¹⁸ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. PG. 34.

Receiving a bouncing ball using the inside of the foot is an important skill for players to master as it allows them to expand their ability to control the ball quickly and with direction. Much like the wedge trap with the sole of the foot, wedge trapping with the inside of the foot allows a player to control a ball on either side of the body and direct it across the body towards the standing leg. This is key when a player needs to move in a direction away from where the ball is coming from (which will usually also be moving away from high pressure).



IMAGE A

IMAGE B

IMAGE C

IMAGE D

IMAGE E

19

Key Coaching Points²⁰

1. **Preparation:** move into the path of the ball; standing leg planted and the knee slightly bent; raise the receiving foot so that it is over the top half (above the equator) of the ball; knee of the receiving leg over the ball; toes of the receiving foot pointed forward; ankle locked; eyes on the ball (See Images A & B)
2. **Contact:** as contact is made with the ball gently press it to the ground; the lower leg is at a 45° angle to the ground; lean forward a bit; arms out for balance; eyes on the ball (See Images C & D)
3. **Follow Through:** smoothly bring the receiving foot down while pressing the ball toward the ground and across the body; finish moving with the ball toward the standing leg side (See Image E)

Receiving a Bouncing Ball – Wedge – Outside of Foot

All components of receiving with this part of the foot are the same as with the inside of the foot with the exceptions that the outside of the foot is used to press the ball to the ground and the final movement is away from the standing leg.²¹

¹⁹ US Youth Soccer Skills School. Receiving the Ball of the Bounce Using the Inside of the Foot. US Youth Soccer. 2011.

²⁰ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.34.

²¹ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.34.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

Key Coaching Points²²

1. **Preparation:** move into the path of the ball; standing leg planted and the knee slightly bent; raise the receiving foot so that it is over the top half (above the equator) of the ball; knee of the receiving leg over the ball; toes of the receiving foot pointed forward; ankle locked; eyes on the ball (See Images A & B)
2. **Contact:** as the ball rises from the bounce, use the outside of the foot to gently press the ball to the ground; the lower leg is at a 45° angle to the ground; lean forward a bit; arms out for balance; eyes on the ball (See Image C)
3. **Follow Through:** smoothly bring the receiving foot down while pressing the ball toward the ground and across the body; finish moving with the ball away from the standing leg side (See Image C & D).

Reinforce receiving skills from prior years.

²² Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.34.

Shooting Skills

Overview of Shooting

While velocity does improve accuracy it is technique that makes the ball fly more so than raw power. The technique of shooting with accuracy must be established before power is added to the player's repertoire. Shooting of some nature must occur at every training session during the U9/U10 years.²³ It is essential that coaches focus on the technique of shooting in a live action environment. Rarely do players have an unopposed shot in a game, thus, once players are capable of a technically sound unopposed shot, coaches should quickly move towards activities that require players to maintain that technique while under pressure. At the U9/U10 age, players should be able to develop technical proficiency in many skills, including a shot on the ground using the instep drive.

Shooting the Ball on the Ground – Instep Drive

Shooting the ball on the ground using the instep is an essential skill that will be used throughout a player's career. Known as the "power" shot; the instep drive ultimately produces a sharp, quick, and accurate shot. It is critical that coaches emphasize technique first in unopposed settings, but quickly moving to opposed, game like situations to ensure that players do not lose their technique when under pressure. Developing a solid, on the move, instep drive is a fundamental skill that is of utmost importance. Thus, coaches should plan to spend considerable time incorporating and reinforcing this technique – with both feet – throughout the U9/U10 age group.



IMAGE A

IMAGE B

IMAGE C

IMAGE D

IMAGE E



IMAGE F

IMAGE G

IMAGE H

IMAGE I

IMAGE J

IMAGE K

IMAGE L

Key Coaching Points²⁵

1. **Preparation:** non-kicking (plant) foot is alongside the ball about 6" away; toes of the plant foot pointed toward the target; knee of the plant foot leg slightly bent; heel of the kicking foot should come up towards the buttocks on the back swing; lock the ankle of the kicking foot during the backswing and keep it locked on ball contact and during the follow through; knee of the kicking leg over the ball; chest forward and over the ball, bending at the waist slightly; arms out for balance; head steady and down with eyes on the ball; on the downswing of the kicking foot point the toes down, lock the ankle and curl the toes back (curling the toes back

²³ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.40.

²⁴ Christie Rampone Soccer Tip #9 Shooting Instep. Jersey Mikes TV. 2012.

²⁵ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.41.

makes a firmer striking surface of the instep...make a fist with the toes and foot) (See Images A, B, F, G, & H)

2. **Contact:** watch the foot strike the ball in the center (where lines A & B intersect); strike through the ball (See Images C, I, & J)
3. **Follow Through:** keep the toes of the kicking foot pointed down on the follow through; the head must remain looking down at the spot where the ball was and steady in line with the midline of the body; the kicking foot comes across the standing leg; the arm opposite of the kicking leg comes across the torso to maintain balance; the arm on the kicking leg side remains slightly out from the torso for balance; the shooter should end up in a corkscrew posture and then land forward on the kicking foot (See Images D, E, K, & L)

Chip Shot

The chip shot is key for scoring in 1v1 situations where the keeper is coming out low towards the player with the ball. The chip shot allows a player to get a very sharp rise on the ball, sending it over the keeper's head and into the net in these situations. Coaches should focus on repetition in game like situations when teaching this skill to ensure players understand not just how to execute it, but when to execute it. Unlike most shots, the chip shot is unique as it has no follow through after making contact with the ball. The foot comes to a stop as the contact is made.



IMAGE A

IMAGE B

IMAGE C

IMAGE D

IMAGE E

IMAGE F



IMAGE G

IMAGE H

IMAGE I

IMAGE J

26

Key Coaching Points²⁷

1. **Preparation:** plant foot beside the ball about 6" to the side with the toes pointed toward the target; knee of the standing leg should be flexed; the **hips** should **face the target**; the kicking leg bends sharply at the knee; heel of the kicking foot must rise sharply toward the buttock; head down and eyes on the ball (See Images A, B, C, G, & H)
2. **Contact:** the lower leg of the kicking foot snaps downward; to get backspin hit the ball under line A; 'squeeze' the ball between the foot and ground; a good snapping action is needed from the leg below the knee and it must be brought down hard; the toes of the

²⁶ STRskillSchool. Learn to chip the ball - Football soccer skills. 2015.

²⁷ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p. 27-28, 42.

kicking foot should **wedge at a 45° angle** between the ground and the bottom of the ball; the instep should actually hit the portion of the ball resting on the ground (See Images D, E, & I)

3. **Follow Through:** the sole of the kicking foot should stop **completely flat** under the ball and thus make a grazing divot in the turf; no further follow through, which causes a backspin on the ball; the head should stay down and steady; the kicking foot stays in place (See Images F & J)

Reinforce shooting skills from prior years: Shooting the Ball on the Ground – Inside of Foot and Shooting the Ball on the Ground – Toe.

Passing Skills

Overview of Passing

The thread that ties together all types of passes is crafting a solid pass that make the receiver, the passer’s teammate, look first rate. This thread then ties the team together.²⁸ At the U9/U10 age, significant growth in passing ability can be seen in players. Increased strength and development gains in motor skills allow players to increase the accuracy and weight of their passes and development in cognitive anticipatory ability provides a basis for movement off the ball and passing to space.

<u>QUALITIES OF A GOOD PASS</u> ACCURACY, PACE, ANGLE, HEIGHT, TIMING, DISGUISE		
High Ball		Low Ball
behind the ball	Support Leg	near or in front of the ball
long follow through	Kicking Leg/Foot	hits the ball hard and sharp
lean backwards	Upper Torso	lean over the ball
below the center point	Point of Contact with the Ball	above or at the center of the ball
after the ball has bounced	Timing of Kick	the moment the ball touches the ground

29

Passing the Ball on the Ground – Instep Pass

The instep pass is a critical skill that provides players with the ability to send a controlled and accurate ball to a teammate a good distance away. Learning the correct technique for the instep pass is essential as without the correct technique players will not be able to control the direction or speed of the pass. Coaches frequently make the incorrect assumption that a player’s strength is the reason that he or she is unable to send a pass over a distance; however it is more often an issue

²⁸ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.21.

²⁹ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.21.

with technique, not strength. With the correct timing and technique, nearly all U9/U10 players will be able to pass the ball across the field in a controlled, well timed, and accurate manner.



IMAGE A

IMAGE B

IMAGE C

IMAGE D

IMAGE E

IMAGE F

IMAGE G



IMAGE H

IMAGE I

30

Key Coaching Points³¹

1. **Preparation:** in the approach to the ball the last full stride of what will become the standing leg must be a long one; plant foot beside the ball about 6" away and with the toes pointing toward the target; bend the knee slightly; the angle of approach can be straight on or diagonal; the backswing of the kicking foot takes the heel towards the buttocks; toes of the kicking foot are pointed down; ankle is locked; eyes on the ball; lean forward slightly over the ball; arms out for balance (See Images A, B, & C)
2. **Contact:** on the downswing the leg swings fully from the hip; keep the toes of the kicking foot pointed down; strike through the ball at the point of intersection of lines A & B; knee of the kicking leg is over the ball; keep the head down; watch the foot connect with the ball (See Images D, E, H, & I)
3. **Follow Through:** the arm of the standing leg side comes across the torso; the arm of the kicking leg side stays back slightly; the kicking foot follows through in the same plane as the flight of the ball for a medium or high pass; for a low pass the follow through of the kicking leg is across the midline of the body so that with the leg on one side coming across and the arm on the opposite side coming across the body ends up in a corkscrew shape momentarily (See Images F & G)

³⁰ Christie Rampone Soccer Tip #5 Instep Pass. Jersey Mikes TV. 2012.

³¹ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.24.

Passing a Ball on the Ground – Crossing (with the Instep)

Crossing the ball into the center of the field occurs when the player is in the attacking third of the field. When a player dribbles the ball down the sideline, the way he then sends it towards the center of the field is through a cross pass. This pass is intended for one of the player's teammates to step up to and take a shot on the net. The cross is typically aimed towards either the top of the box, or the penalty mark, depending on the goal keeper, the passer's technical ability, and the location of the player's teammates in relation to the defenders. Coaches must encourage players to maintain technique and execute a cross pass even when under pressure. Additionally, ensuring that players work to build their ability to cross with both the left and right foot is critical to develop a truly versatile and valuable player.



IMAGE A

IMAGE B

IMAGE C

IMAGE D

IMAGE E

32

Key Coaching Points³³

1. **Preparation:** during the dribble down field sight the target space across the field to pass the ball to; from the dribble the next to last touch of the ball should be to push it slightly and diagonally towards the inside of the field (prep touch); on the last stride the plant foot should go beside the ball about 6" away from the ball with the toes pointed across the field toward the opposite touchline; the knee of the standing leg should be to some extent bent for balance; the heel of the kicking foot should rise sharply towards the buttocks; the entire kicking leg should go back from the hip; the head should now be a bit forward and the eyes on the ball; arms out slightly from the sides for balance; on the downswing of the kicking foot the toes of that foot should be pointed down and the ankle locked
2. **Contact:** strike the center of the ball, where lines A & B meet, with the instep (for an out-swinger strike the ball to the outside of line B and for an in-swinger strike the ball to the inside of line B); connect with the ball a little below the horizontal midline (line A) of the ball to increase height (or on the midline for a flat flight); watch the foot connect with the ball
3. **Follow Through:** follow through with the kicking leg forward and slightly across the midline of the body; hips should now be square with the opposite touchline; come down on the kicking foot at the end of the follow through swing and then look up

³² US Youth Soccer Skills School. Crossing. US Youth Soccer. 2011.

³³ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.24.

Reinforce passing skills from prior years: Passing the Ball on the Ground – Push Pass, Passing the Ball on the Ground – Toe Poke, Passing the Ball on the Ground – Chip Pass, Clearance Pass.

Dribbling Skills

Overview of Dribbling

A change of direction and change of speed are crucial to successful dribbling. Change of direction is the ability while dribbling to alter course to the left or the right or a 180° turn. Change of speed while dribbling could be from slow to fast or fast to slow, to come to a complete stop or to move from a standing start.³⁴ Dribbling remains a key skill at the U9/U10 age group, and players should be encouraged to take on opponents 1v1 using their dribbling skills.

For the U9/U10 age group, there is no more critical skill to coach than how to use foot skills to take on opponents in 1v1 situations and coaches should incorporate dribbling in opposed settings in every practice. By the end of the U9/U10 age group, players should have a set of moves that they consistently perform in 1v1 situations. Coaches must be aware that in learning and focusing 1v1 dribbling skills, players will frequently turn over the ball – this is to be expected and is ok. Allowing the players the freedom to use creativity and take on opponents 1v1, may result in more turn overs at the U9/U10 age group, however it is absolutely essential to encourage this now so that by the U11/U12 level all players have developed this ability. Like the other technical skills, coaches should place considerable emphasis on dribbling with the left and right foot to allow the player to become dexterous with both feet.

Fakes

A fake is a move that is done with the ball; actually moving the ball (as opposed to a feint, which is done only with the body and involves no contact with the ball until the player plays it). A fake is done with the feet. The goal of a fake is to get the opponent off balance (wrong footed) or going in the direction opposite of where the player in possession of the ball really plans to go. When using a fake, subtle control of the body is required. The center of gravity should not be moved too far sideways from the body's midline. If the body weight is unnecessarily shifted in the direction of the swerve, the player will find it difficult to make a fast second move. Changing direction quickly during a fake requires the player to keep a low center of gravity until the second move is started.

Coaches must be cautious with the systematic instruction of fakes. In coaching, the main thing is to develop the abilities that will help the players in making effective 'moves', such as speed, mobility and a sense of how to shift the center of gravity economically. Once a player is comfortable with the basics of dribbling then cunning must become a part of the skill.³⁵ Coaches should be sure to incorporate substantial time with the ball into each practice at this age, as it is the prime opportunity for players to learn and develop these key skills.

CUNNING – EXHIBITING SKILL, CRAFTY, ARTFUL, CLEVER, SLY, DEXTERITY, KNOWLEDGE³⁶

Fakes - Maradona

³⁴ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.18.

³⁵ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.20.

³⁶ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.20.

The Maradona turn allows a player to screen the ball while going past an opponent. As the player dribbles forward they place one foot on top of the ball and then hop over it turning in the air to face the opposite direction. As they land their opposite foot rolls the ball backwards and across their body allowing them to complete the turn and accelerate away.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D



IMAGE E

Key Coaching Points³⁷

1. **Preparation:** The ball should be close to the feet as the player brings one foot up to pull the ball towards them.
2. **Contact:** The sole of the foot is used to pull the ball in and the player lifts the foot off the ball as they spin in the same direction of the foot used. The other foot then runs over the top of the ball using the sole and the momentum used when spinning off the ball.
3. **Follow Through:** The ball should end up ahead of the player on the inside of the foot last touching the ball.

Fakes - Matthews

The Matthews move involves a player faking to cut the ball in one direction and then immediately taking it away to the other side. As the player dribbles forward they lean to one side and move the ball slightly with the inside of their foot. The player should exaggerate this move to convince the defender they are going in that direction. They then quickly cut the ball to the other side with the outside of their foot and accelerate away.

³⁷ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D



IMAGE E

Key Coaching Points³⁸

1. **Preparation:** The ball should be on the inside of the first kicking foot, close to the players feet
2. **Contact:** The inside of the front foot reaches in front of the ball to pull the ball back across the player's body as the player twists (hips) with it. The standing foot is then brought forward and the instep is used to push the ball back in the direction the player was originally going
3. **Follow Through:** The ball should roll ahead of the standing foot to allow the player to move off from the defender

Fakes - Beardsley

The Beardsley is used to unbalance the defender when dribbling. The dribbler will pretend to change direction by reaching around the far side of the ball with the inside of their big toe. They will

³⁸ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.

cut the ball back momentarily but then spin back in their previous direction and accelerate away. This move is made more convincing by the dribbler turning their hips as they cut the ball back.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

Key Coaching Points³⁹

1. **Preparation:** The player should have the ball in close proximity to inside toes of the front foot
2. **Contact:** The ball is delicately shifted with the inside toe area to one side, the foot then rapidly comes behind the ball to play out again with the outside toe area of the same foot
3. **Follow Through:** The ball should roll ahead of the standing foot to allow the player to move off from the defender

Fakes - The Puskas

The Puskas is used when the player wants to move from right to left or left to right using both feet. It can be used if a player is losing close control of the ball when an opponent is closing in on them. The quick shift of direction with the sole enables the attacker to keep the ball close to the body while changing direction.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

³⁹ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.



IMAGE D



IMAGE E

Key Coaching Points⁴⁰

1. **Preparation:** The ball is slightly outside of the players left or right foot
2. **Contact:** If the ball is to the outside left, the left foot traps the ball with the sole and pulls it back towards the standing right leg. The outside of the right foot then pushes the ball to the outside right
3. **Follow Through:** the player will then accelerate off diagonally in the direction the ball was last played

The Scissors

The Scissors is used to make the opponent shift their weight and defensive stance in one direction to expose them on their weak side. Done at pace, the scissors should create enough room besides a defender to be able to push past them and leave them on their back foot unable to effectively recover.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

⁴⁰ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.



IMAGE D



IMAGE E

Key Coaching Points⁴¹

1. **Preparation:** The ball is on the inside of the standing foot with enough space between the ball and moving foot to bring it through and around the inside of the ball, making sure the toe of the moving foot is pointed down. Have a slight bend in both knees, making it easier for the player to have good balance and quicker movement
2. **Contact:** As the moving foot lands back in its starting position, the non-moving foot takes the ball in the opposite direction to fool a defender
3. **Follow Through:** As the foot meets the ball you should push it in to the direction in which you want to move into. With low center of gravity you can move quickly and controllably

Turns

While a fake is intended to allow a player to continue his or her path forward, turns allow a player to change direction without losing the ball. Like with fakes, the importance of maintaining core balance and avoiding significant shifts in body weight is key to executing turns as well. On the field, players will frequently encounter situations where an alternative pathway is more likely to set them up to execute an effective pass or shot on net. In these moments, the player must be able to draw the defender in before quickly and methodically executing a turn that will allow her to change direction and move away from pressure. Turning, like fakes, should be part of every practice, and players should be encouraged to experiment and try these new skills out during practices and games.

Turns - Inside Hook

The inside hook is used to quickly change direction when dribbling. The player reaches around the furthest side of the ball with the inside of their foot and using a sharp cut back they bring the ball back in the opposite direction. The player pivots on their standing foot and quickly accelerates away.

⁴¹ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

Key Coaching Points⁴²

1. **Preparation:** Plant your standing foot parallel to the outside of the ball, pivot on this foot and bring kicking foot around the back of the ball
2. **Contact:** Use the inside of the kicking foot to chop the ball backwards as you turn in that direction
3. **Follow Through:** Contact should have been strong enough to accelerate away from mark

Turns - Outside Hook

The outside hook allows a player to quickly cut the ball away from pressure. The player will plant their foot alongside the ball and then reach around the furthest side of the ball with the outside of their other foot. The player will then flick the ball 180 degrees in the opposite direction before turning and accelerating away.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

Key Coaching Points⁴³

1. **Preparation:** The inside of the standing foot should be parallel to the ball with enough space for the kicking foot to pass between the ball and foot. The kicking foot is then brought through the space and turns out so the outside of the foot is facing the back of the ball.
2. **Contact:** The kicking foot is then brought backwards so the outside of the foot pushes the ball back in the direction the player came from
3. **Follow Through:** The ball should be pushed back with enough weight to accelerate away from the defender.

Turns - Drag Back

⁴² Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.24.

⁴³ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.

The drag back turn can be used to pull the ball away from an opponent. The player will plant the left foot next to the ball and place the right foot directly on top of it. The player will then drag the ball 2-3 yards backwards with the sole of their foot, making sure to open their shoulder to allow the ball to roll across in front of their body. The player will push the ball away with their leading foot and accelerate away.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

Key Coaching Points⁴⁴

1. **Preparation:** The standing foot is planted on the outside of the ball and the kicking foot is brought towards the ball
2. **Contact:** The ball is stopped with the sole of the foot and pulled backwards while the player turns in the same direction
3. **Follow Through:** The player should turn to the right if the right foot is used to pull the ball back and likewise the left if the left is used. This is to ensure the ball is still being shielded throughout the move and under the attacker's control

Turns - Stop Turn

The stop turn is when the player wants to quickly change direction whilst stopping the ball. The player will stop the ball with the sole of their foot and then quickly step forward with the same foot, planting it in front of the ball. Next they should take the ball away with the outside of the opposite foot. Accelerate once the turn is complete and the space is free in front of them.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

⁴⁴ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.

Key Coaching Points⁴⁵

1. **Preparation:** The none kicking foot is slightly behind the ball as the kicking foot reaches forward for the ball
2. **Contact:** The ball is stopped with the sole of the foot
3. **Follow Through:** The player would then step forward with the same foot and plant in front of the ball and then the ball is taken away with the outside of the opposite foot

Turns - L Turn

The L turn is when the player changes the direction of the ball and their body. This is used if the player is going forward and then quickly needs to change direction of the field. The player will stop the ball with the sole of their foot and drag it bag behind them, then using their big toe on the outside of the ball push it to the other side of their none kicking foot. Turning in to that direction of the ball and then taking with the planted foot.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

Key Coaching Points⁴⁶

1. **Preparation:** The player shapes to strike the ball
2. **Contact:** The kicking foot is placed on top of the ball and pulled backwards behind the standing foot, it is then pushed behind the standing leg using the inside of the kicking foot
3. **Follow Through:** The ball should roll out to the side of the standing foot and taken away

Turns - Cruyff

The Cruyff turn is when the player looks to fake to pass or shoot by planting the non kicking foot in front of the ball. With the opposite foot, use the inside of the foot to move the ball behind the non-kicking foot. Then take the ball away with the none-kicking foot.

⁴⁵ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.

⁴⁶ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.



IMAGE A



IMAGE B



IMAGE C



IMAGE D

Key Coaching Points⁴⁷

1. **Preparation:** The player should shape up to shoot the ball. The kicking foot comes around the front far side of the ball and turns so the toes face inward
2. **Contact:** The ball is then pushed backwards past the instep of the standing foot with the instep of the kicking foot.
3. **Follow Through:** The player should turn to the left if the left foot is the standing leg and likewise the right if the right was standing and move away with the ball.

Reinforce dribbling skills from prior years: Starting & Stopping, Running with the Ball, Shielding, Dribbling while Changing Direction.

Conclusion

U9/U10 is a fertile period for technical skill development. Coaches must take full advantage of this, not by attempting to teach a wide variety of technical skills, but by focusing on ensuring players have a high degree of mastery of each and every skill listed above when under pressure. If a coach is able to accomplish this goal, her players will see tremendous benefits in their efficacy on the field and their long term accomplishments in the sport. Additionally, players must be encouraged to practice using their non-dominant foot each and every practice in game like situations.

Coaching U9/U10 Psychological Skill Development (psychological & mental strength skills)

Introduction

Psychology is the second priority for the U9/U10 age group. Psychology and mental strength are keys to athletic success, and neglecting them is detrimental to player development. While many coaches find it to be a challenging topic to cover, with some education most coaches can be highly effective in coaching these skills and as a result can develop mentally strong players who are

⁴⁷ Snow, Sam. Skills School: Fundamental Ball Skills. US Youth Soccer. 2010. p.32.

prepared to play and practice at 110%. These are the skills that allow a player to maintain his integrity in challenging situations, develop the confidence and work ethic essential to success both on and off the field, remain composed under pressure in live play on the field and even remain calm and in control in the moments before taking a penalty kick.

Discussion

While a few themes carry over from previous seasons, such as Fair Play, Parental Involvement, and How to Play, a number of new concepts emerge as cognitive growth expands self-awareness and social awareness. The U9/U10 player is very open to psychological development and the coach can have a tremendous impact in developing mentally strong, determined, and resilient players. Coaches must be constantly aware not only of what they are verbally communicating, but also in regards to the messages their tone, body language, and actions are communicating. At this age, players have begun to identify inconsistencies between words and these other factors, so it is essential that coaches are focused on this self-awareness and on maintaining a consistent and supportive approach to developing players.

U9/U10 Target Psychological Skills
Communication
Fair Play
Groups of 3, 4, or 5
How to Play
How to Win/Lose Gracefully
Increased Responsibility
Increased Sensitivity
Parental Involvement
Emotional Regulation
Focus for 1/2 game
Self-Motivation

Communication

Players must be taught to communicate with one another throughout the game. While coaches may find that players have fairly well developed verbal skills, they are often still in need of guidance regarding how to effectively speak with one another. It's important that coaches emphasize the importance of soccer speak as an instructional language, and help all players to develop an understanding of what to say, how to listen, and when to speak. The first task is to get players to speak to one another on the field about soccer related things. Teaching players to say "man on" to their teammate when an opponent is running up behind their teammate is a great introduction to soccer communication. You can teach players how loud to be and help them to understand when to communicate it with minimal practice. Initially, it may help to have the players on the bench take on responsibility for calling "man on" to their teammates on the field. This can help them to develop the skill without all of the distractions that occur when they are on the field.

As players expand their vocabulary, you will hear many “I’m open” calls from players who are, in fact, not at all open. This is a first step. The next step is to help the player with the ball be aware of what is going on around him or her. We don’t want players with their heads down passing the ball simply because they hear “I’m open”, they need to have their heads up and be looking around to ensure that they can connect the pass. As players develop, coaches should focus on helping players connect their newly developing ability to anticipate where the ball could go with their actions – so that the player moves to the open space where the ball might go and communicates while moving to that space. This is a complex skill for the U9/U10 athlete and requires an awareness of timing, others on the field, and performing multiple actions at once (talking and moving), however it is a great one for coaches to work towards as these are critical skills for players to begin to develop.

In activities, coaches should incorporate communication requirements like “my ball” and “man on” – and should consistently enforce this as they would any technique. In a passing and receiving activity, just as if a team would lose possession if the ball went out of play, if the player receiving the ball fails to say “my ball” when receiving it, that too can result in a turnover. The key here is consistency. The coach must make communication as much a part of the game as anything else is, and must hold players accountable for communicating with one another.

Fair Play

Fair Play becomes increasingly important at the U9/U10 age group as players begin to become more aware of the world around them. Players at this age can understand rules and are quick to spot inconsistencies in application. It’s critical that coaches not merely talk about fair play, but model it in their every behavior. This is a tough task but one that is absolutely critical that you commit to accomplishing as a youth coach.

Fair play is about playing within the rules and doing the right thing, regardless of the circumstances. It’s about remembering that the players, referees, and coaches are all humans. It’s about remembering that this is youth soccer and that we should all be walking off the field with our dignity intact. Coaches must embody the principles of fair play, as well as teach players the actions that will allow them to demonstrate appropriate behavior in a variety of situations. Playing fair is not only about respecting the rules themselves, but also the spirit of the game. Coaches should be the first line of enforcement in regards to fair play. If a player on your team commits an intentional foul and the ref does not see, the coach has a responsibility to pull the athlete aside and address it.

Respecting the Referee and her Calls:

Coaches can model fair play by showing respect for the referee’s calls both verbally and non-verbally. Anyone involved with soccer understands that one thing about the game is certain – there will be some bad calls. This is a part of the game we have to accept and move on from. Players need to be taught to avoid getting caught up in the referee’s calls and focusing on the next play. Referee’s calls are not within our control. How we respond to them and how we play are. Players should always thank the referee at the end of the game.

Respecting our Opponents:

Players should be taught to treat their opponents with respect, regardless of the opponent’s actions. When an opponent is injured on a play and your team has the ball, the appropriate thing to do is

have the player in possession kick the ball out of play to allow the injured player to get medical attention. This is true whether your player has possession in your defending end or whether she is on a fast break to score. When an opponent is injured we kick the ball out of play. The opponent then will typically throw the ball back to your team after the injured player has been helped off the field. In a drop ball situation, you may choose to have your player not contest the drop ball if you feel that your player fouled the opponent.

When a player is on the ground, teach your athletes to offer a helping hand to assist the athlete in getting up whether the player is a teammate or an opponent. When someone goes down, we help them up. If the person doesn't accept the help, that's ok – the athlete did the right thing and can feel proud that she acted with class and did the right thing. Players need to be taught that there are no excuses for poor sportsmanship – there is no action that the opponent or the referee can take that would justify retaliation on the field.

If a member of the opposing team engages in unsportsmanlike conduct, your players must understand that does not give them a license to engage in unsportsmanlike conduct. As a coach, it can be hard to restrain the frustration when you see your athletes in an environment where the opponent isn't respecting the rules, but your commitment to fair play rather than those emotions must guide your actions. Arlington teams are expected to maintain the integrity of the game regardless of the opponent's actions. This is extremely challenging but is a critical value that cannot be compromised. As a coach, your courage and commitment to fair play will be a significant factor in how your players chose to conduct themselves.

Should a coach have concerns about conduct that occurred during a game, the coach should report the issue promptly to their respective ASC directors who will address it with the appropriate parties.

“The strength of the Group is the strength of the leaders.” – Vince Lombardi

Groups of 3, 4, or 5

While the U7/U8 age group is dominated by pairs, by U9/U10 players are looking to form larger social groups. This provides the perfect ground work for them to explore more advanced activities that require small group play. Coaches should actively select activities that focus on small groups, allowing players to work together to develop an understanding of triangles, combination play, and other tactical concepts. These small groups also provide athletes with greater opportunity for social skills development, as they are forced to work together to accomplish a goal. Coaches should ensure that groups are mixed up regularly during activities so that all players learn to play with one another.

One thing coaches must watch out for is the potential for groups to begin to focus more on the outcome than the process. As players are developing more self-awareness, they are also developing more awareness of others strengths and weaknesses. Players, who are used to relying on only their own skill and the skill of maybe one other person, are now more reliant on the skill level of all group members. This has the potential to create tension within small groups, particularly when two

groups are competing. It's important for coaches to be vigilant of this and work with players to ensure that the focus remains on the learning process and individual development rather than the outcome.

How to Play

Players must be encouraged to view their opponent not as "the enemy," but as another group of players who are there because – like your players – they want to play soccer. Coaches must actively embody this – expressing the utmost respect and appreciation for the skill of every athlete on the field. Players at this age are increasingly aware of the behavior of adults and peers, and will likely bring to it your attention when a player or coach's behavior is outside of what they understand to be respectful. Regardless of what color their jersey is, we are talking about groups of 3rd and 4th graders.

Coaches must focus on developing all players and ensuring that each player is a respected part of the team. It is ok to acknowledge that all players are different, but do this by recognizing the unique strengths that each player brings to the team. Many players will be keenly aware of the coach's actions in how they talk to different players, how players are subbed and rotated through positions, and the non-verbal responses of the coach to player actions. It's important that coaches are aware of this and work to mediate their own emotions in order to help the team view all athletes as important and appreciated members of the team.

Coaches should utilize flexible formations and ensure that they are teaching the team that there are no players on the field who exclusively defend or exclusively attack. All players – even the goalie, must be fully engaged in the attacking and defending effort. Avoid using terminology like "defenders" which implies to the young player that they are only engaged in defending efforts. Players should be taught to understand positioning in relation to others on the field, and as a fluid rather than a fixed concept. If a back has the ball and space to dribble, she should be encouraged to do so, while also communicating with other players to ensure someone is supporting her. Players will frequently forget to communicate what they are doing – but the coach should not discourage players from carrying the ball out of position or completing an overlap. Instead, the coach should focus on encouraging communication among all team members, helping all of the players understand how each position on the field relates to other positions and working with each player to developing field awareness.

During games, coaches should minimize coaching from the sidelines. Specifically, coaches must avoid yelling instructions or coaching players while on the field. Soccer is a player directed sport and it is therefore critical that players be given the opportunity to creatively solve problems on the field. Expect this to result in many turnovers and likely even some goals against your team. Encourage the creative attempt. At U9/U10, we are not looking to build teams that simply can score a lot of goals. If our objective is to building teams with that focus, then we need to expect that by U14, we will have teams that can no longer keep up with the increased speed of play of the game. Instead, by focusing on allowing your players to make decisions now, they will build (through trial and error) the foundational knowledge that will provide you with the basis for a competitive,

intelligent, team at the higher levels.

How to Win/Lose Gracefully

At U9/U10, players tend to be more aware of winning and losing – and begin to see connections between actions and outcome. It is critical that the coach help players to understand what it means to win and lose gracefully. As players reach U9/U10, their understanding of empathy becomes significantly greater which can provide the coach with a key opportunity to discuss this topic. Asking players about how they felt in certain situations can help them to reflect on how their actions might impact others.

Players at this age will celebrate when they get a goal. This is developmentally appropriate. The key is to help players to keep those celebrations proportional and respectful. Ideally, the celebration should not stall play, but instead take place through high-fives as the team runs to get back to their defending half. Any type of prolonged display of celebration should be avoided. It's important that the coach not focus so much on the goal, but on the skill/intelligent decisions that led to the goal. This helps players to focus on the process – which is the key to development – rather than the outcome.

Likewise, when your team is losing, it's important to help athletes understand that this is expected – losing is as much a part of the game as winning. Coaches need to reinforce that while it is easy to show good sportsmanship and grace when things are going your way, a truly classy team is one that can display grace regardless of the outcome. As a coach, keeping the focus on the process can help players to see positives in their performance, rather than focus solely on the outcome. Ask your players what they think your team did very well, and what they think the other team did well. Focus on what you can learn from the other team and what your team can practice to achieve the level of competency that your opponent has. Appreciate the talent and class of your opponents. Appreciate the class and talent of your athletes. Be sure to acknowledge when you see your athletes rise above poor sportsmanship, and emphasize how that rising above and behaving with grace and class is what makes Arlington teams special.

Increased Responsibility

Players at U9/U10 want and should be encouraged to take on additional responsibilities. Coaches need to provide opportunities for players to take on responsibilities within the team and understand the need to step back and let kids sort certain things out on their own. Some examples include:

- Picking up their own stuff – no one leaves until everything in the bench area (or wherever they all put their stuff down) has been claimed.
- Picking up team stuff – players can pick up cones, put balls in the ball bag, and ensure that the team equipment is taken care of. Coaches should explain to players what this means, and may even want to assign groups of 2-3 players to be responsible for different tasks (ball collectors, cone collectors, pinnie collectors, etc).
- Setting stuff up – let players set out cones for goals during the scrimmage. It's ok if the goals aren't perfectly aligned or even the same size – the kids will work it out if you give them the opportunity.

- Fair teams – let players arrange themselves into fair teams if you feel they can handle it for scrimmages or activities. Fairness is an important value at this age and for many players will outweigh the desire to be with friends. If the teams don't seem fair, let them play and then call them in and ask them to switch around to make the teams fair – or switch the players yourself. At the next practice, try again - ask if the players think they can divide themselves into fair teams and if they feel they can, give them the chance to do so.
- Positions and formation – during scrimmages let the players take on responsibility for determining their formation and/or organizing themselves into positions. After a certain amount of time, tell both teams that everyone needs to rotate to a new position, and once again let them sort that out. If it's taking too long, send the ball in and tell them it's live – they will sort the positions out on the fly.

Coaches should also communicate basic information about games and practices with both players and parents though using age appropriate messaging (Player message: see you at practice on Wednesday, Parent message “Practice will be on Wednesday at 5:30 at Thorndike Field.”) Communicating this type of information to players as well as parents (always tell the parents too!) instills confidence in players and allows them to take on some responsibility for team events.

Increased Sensitivity

With the development of increased self-awareness comes the development of greater concern about peer acceptance and relationships. For the U9/U10 player, feeling a sense of belonging within the team, and feeling that they are valued as a member of the team by peers and coaches is extremely important. It's important at this age that coaches are aware of the peer relationships and work with the group to accept each member of the team. There will often be social challenges within a team, due to different levels of dedication and interpersonal styles, and it is important that the coach be attentive to any potential issues that are emerging. The message must be one of acceptance, without disregarding the feelings of any player. In this position, the coach has the opportunity to help all players to see where others might be coming from, and develop an environment where all players feel supported and welcome.

During this age group, the coach is likely to witness individual players begin to develop a variety of achievement orientations. Achievement orientation is how the player rationalizes the outcome of a behavior, and can be different depending on the situation. It's useful for the coach to be able to identify a player's achievement orientation so that he or she can coach the player to encourage a balanced approach, ensuring all players are supportive of teammates and avoid players becoming discouraged.

Some players have an internal achievement orientation for all outcomes, while others have an internal achievement for exclusively positive or negative outcomes. An internal sense of achievement means that they are likely to believe they are fully responsible for a given outcome. For example, a player with a positive outcome internal achievement orientation is likely to feel a significant amount of joy if he scores the lone goal for his team in a 1:0 victory. Likewise, a player with a negative outcome internal achievement orientation is likely to feel fully responsible for the

team's loss if he lets in a goal – even if the score was 1-5 and the prior goal keeper was responsible for letting in the other 4 goals.

Other players may naturally gravitate towards an external achievement orientation, where they place responsibility for a positive and/or negative outcome on external factors. For example, a player with a positive outcome external achievement orientation is likely to view a 1-0 victory as the result of external causes, such as a teammate's actions, a lucky call by the referee, or poor play by the opponent. Similarly, a player with a negative outcome external achievement orientation is likely to view a loss as the result of a teammate's mistake, poor officiating, or unfair or unsporting play from the other team.

While some players may have an internal or external achievement motivation for both positive and negative events, the coach is likely to find that a number of players have either an internal positive achievement orientation and external negative achievement orientation, or vice versa. Coaches should be aware of these differences and should focus on helping players to develop a balance so that they feel a degree of personal responsibility for both successful moments and moments that could use some additional practice. At this age, coaches should ensure that players are not feeling guilt or shame for any aspect of their play. This age group is where creativity should be encouraged at all times and coaches should focus on the value of trial and error (and there will be many errors!) rather than the score of a game.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement begins to change at the U9/U10 age group as players develop increased personal responsibility and independence. Parents do, however, still play a large role in the player's lives and players typically still enjoy their presence. At U9/U10, parents typically remain on the opposite side of the field unless the coach instructs them to come over (typically due to a medical need). It is very important that the coach lay out boundaries with parents at the start of the season, for the sake of the player, the coach, and the team. It is critical that the coach develop a respectful and open relationship with parents, while also making it clear that the coach is responsible for the coaching of the team. Setting this boundary early helps to prevent issues from developing later in the season and allows coaches to focus on coaching and building positive relationships with the players and parents on the team.

Coaches should remind parents during the preseason meeting of key boundaries, including staying on the parent side of the field during games, only cheering – no instruction from the parent sideline, and encouraged to support their players and not attempt to critique their child's performance. Essentially, leave the coaching to the coaches and enjoy your athlete's achievements! Parents should be encouraged to email the coach to set up a time to talk by phone or in person, should they have any concerns, and not to talk before or after a game or practice when players are around – as players will be very aware of what is being discussed. Players should also be encouraged to communicate directly with the coach about their own questions – and coaches should ensure that they are respectful and provide athletes with genuine answers to their questions.

Emotional Regulation

Tears are very common at this age, and should be considered a natural part of a player's processing the world around them. While coaches often feel uncomfortable when a player is upset, it is very important for the coach to approach this as a natural thing and validate the player's emotions. For example, if a player is upset, it is important that the coach get down to the player's level and help them express in words what they are upset about. The coach should relay a level of understanding, while also helping the player to understand that, while the upsetting situation did occur and the player's emotions are justified, it doesn't define the player and there will be many future opportunities where the situation will likely turn out differently. Reinforcing through both words and actions that sometimes bad calls happen and that's ok – we will do our best to play by the rules regardless and focus on our effort and playing fair, not the score or the opponents behavior, is essential at this age. The key is to help players to accept the emotions that they are feeling so that they can understand and ultimately develop the ability to regulate those feelings and prioritize the key values of fair play.

Focus for ½ Game

Coaches need to work with players to help them understand how to maintain focus during the game. To help players focus, coaches must engage them. Initially, this engagement will likely require the coach to ask the player many questions, to help them focus. As the players develop, the coach can ask them to see if they can spot a combination, an opportunity to take on a player 1v1, who was and was not open for the player with the ball, where they could have moved to get open, etc. These types of questions help players to maintain focus and to identify key situations on the field. Players will always focus better when they are engaged. If you tell them something, their engagement and understanding will be very limited. If you engage them in a conversation where the players talk at a 2:1 ratio (2x the amount as the coach) they will learn and understand.

One great opportunity to work with players on this is while they are on the bench. The coach or assistant coach can help players to learn to focus when they are subbed out by asking them questions about what they are seeing on the field. This is a critical learning opportunity for players as they begin to develop greater tactical awareness as the result of their burgeoning ability to anticipate. Focus should also be part of half-time, where it's important that coaches work with players to keep the focus on the game and not on extraneous stimuli (for example, snack). For U9/U10 players, they may not yet be ready for any type of elaborate tactical analysis during half-time, but the coach should focus on engaging them with questions like "what did we do really well last half?" and "what should we try to do differently this half?."

Self-Motivation

Perhaps the most valuable psychological skill that a player can learn from athletics is self-motivation. When a person has the ability to self-motivate from within, he or she effectively has a limitless number of achievements she can accomplish. Coaches should avoid using external motivators, such as trophies or medals, and instead focus on helping players to develop this important skill.

Self-motivation is what allows us each to set a goal and go for it. Goals are an important part of self-

motivation, and players should be encouraged to come up with goals for each game or practice with the coach. These should be a combination of team goals and individual goals. Coaches need not make this complex, however it is useful to spend a moment or two with a player to hear what his or her goals are. Sometimes, a player will set a goal to achieve something that is not necessarily within his or her control. For example, a player may state that his goal is to win the game. This is not within the player's control – the other team may simply be that much better, the referee may make terrible calls that could reward the other team, or any number of other factors could emerge that would mean that the outcome of the game is not within the player's control.

The coach should help to steer players away from these types of goals and towards goals that are effort based – such as getting to 90% of the 50-50 balls in the player's area. The reason for this is that, if a player sets a goal that is not within his control, then accomplishing that goal is also not within his control – thereby devaluing the role of effort in achieving his objective. If a team wins the majority of the 50-50 balls, the likelihood of them winning the game is fairly high. However the outcome of the game is not the motivator here. Instead, the motivator comes from the player's own drive to accomplish a goal that is within his control to accomplish. By helping players to create personal and team goals that are effort based, a coach can reinforce the development of self-motivation. As the player sees herself accomplish these goals, she becomes empowered to set other goals and begins to believe in her ability to accomplish whatever she sets out to accomplish. This drive is essential to success on the field and in life.

Psychological Skills Conclusion

The U9/U10 age group is a particularly fertile period in which the coach can lay the groundwork for mentally strong athletes. Athletes at this age are extremely pliable and eager to learn. This combination allows them to absorb these concepts without much question. They are open to talking about their feelings and do not have preconceived ideas about the psychological piece of athletics. By ingraining these concepts in them at this age, the foundation will be set for more advanced psychological skill development at the older ages. From a coach's perspective, the most essential component to developing mentally strong athletes will be consistency in application – meaning acting on and in line with these concepts at all practices and games, and a willingness to use guided discovery (much like the Socratic method) to help athletes discover their own knowledge and abilities. If applied consistently, the coach will find that these psychological concepts will allow the coach to create a stronger, more effective, and more cohesive team that is capable of remaining composed and motivated in nearly any situation.

Coaching U9/U10 Fitness, Ability & Health Skills

Introduction

Fitness is the third priority for the U9/U10 age group. At this age group, it's important that all fitness activities include the ball. Fitness activities like sprints, runs, and the like will have no benefit, and in fact can be harmful, for children at this age. All fitness activities should be incorporated within other activities that include the ball. Players should be exposed to activities that require a change in pace on a regular basis so that they begin to understand the importance of

changes in speed. By the end of the age group, this awareness will begin to translate into highly effective timed runs into the box. Each of the skills below is essential to player development, and the coach should ensure that they are all included in the team’s weekly training session(s).

Discussion

Fitness, while not as important as in the earlier ages, is still an important component at this age. By the U9/U10 age, players are beginning to develop greater muscle mass and greater muscle control, which allows them to begin to develop the timing, agility, and ability to move their bodies with smaller and more refined motions. This development is key to the player’s long term athletic success and for that reason, coaches must help players to use these physical changes to develop the additional skills and abilities that they are now capable of learning. Coaches should focus on fitness within the context of existing drills and activities, rather than creating separate fitness activities. This may include games where players are dribbling a ball at speed and on the coaches signal may have to quickly complete 6 lateral hops or another fitness skill before jumping up and quickly dribbling off again. Activities like this benefit the player’s fitness development as well as their technical skills, which is a double bonus. Additionally, players are more likely to find these types of activities engaging and thus tend to put greater effort into them.

Physical Fitness & Ability Skills
Agility
Body Resistance Exercises
Endurance
Range of Motion Flexibility
Rhythm Exercises

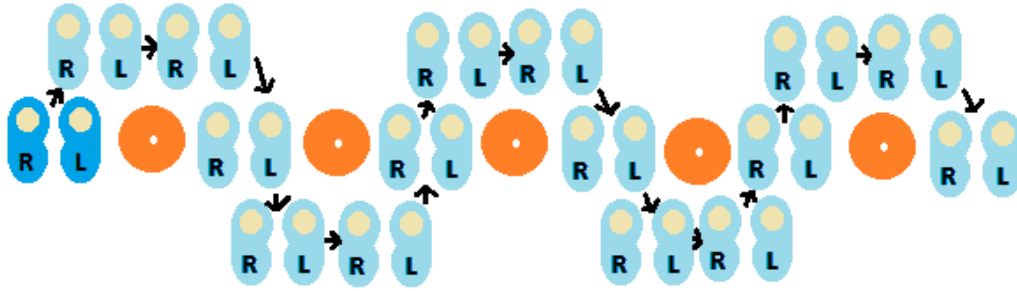
Injury Prevention & Healthy Routine
Reinforce – Regular Warm Up
Cool Down
Nutrition
Hydration

Physical Fitness & Ability Skills

Agility:

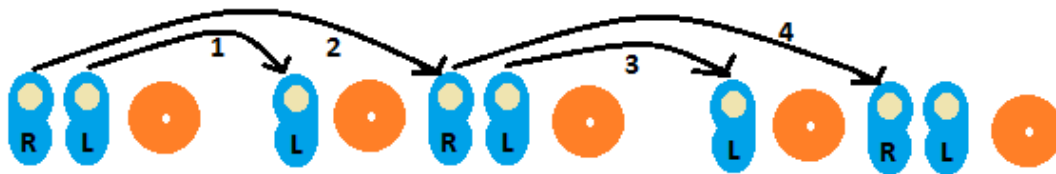
Agility is the ability to quickly and effectively change the body’s position. It is a core skill that provides a foundation for virtually all motions a player would perform on a soccer field. Agility involves movement on many planes. Players at U9/U10 should be given ample opportunity to build their vertical, lateral, horizontal and cutting action skills. Improving agility allows athletes to move their feet (and bodies) faster and, by learning correct technique, minimize their risk of injury. By practicing agility skills using correct form in practice, young athletes will instinctively adopt these movement patterns into his game play.

“Fast Feet” – Forward & Backward:



Take small but quick steps, landing on the ball of the foot moving behind one cone, then in front of the next, behind the third, and so forth. Keep the knees bent.

“Fast Feet” – Lateral:



Step 1: lift left foot over cone and step down next to the next cone.

Step 2: lift right foot over cone and put it down next to left foot.

Step 3: repeat Step 1.

Step 4: repeat Step 2. Continue to repeat. Then switch directions and start facing the opposite direction so the right foot is closest to the first cone.

Cutting:



Cutting is a way in which a player can change direction. Players should always change direction off their inside foot (the one away from the cone). As the player lifts that foot, his hip should drop a bit in the new direction he is planning to move. The inside foot takes the lead on the change of direction and is responsible for a large chunk of the deceleration. As the player is about to change direction, the inside leg hits the ground first, followed by the outside leg. The outside leg (the foot closest to the cone), finishes off the deceleration effort. Players should place their outside foot down to finish the deceleration and begin to push off that leg to accelerate the opposite direction. When the player is pushing off their back foot (the straight leg) to accelerate, it is critical that the player's ankle, knee, and hip are in alignment. The coach must ensure that players practice this using the correct form to avoid putting them at risk for an ACL (knee ligament) injury. Once players master the basics of the form, they should be taught to move at full speed towards the cone and to cut away from the cone, exploding forward towards the next cone. If a player is unable to perform with the correct form at the higher speed, the coach should instruct the player to slow down a bit until he or she has mastery of the cut at that speed.

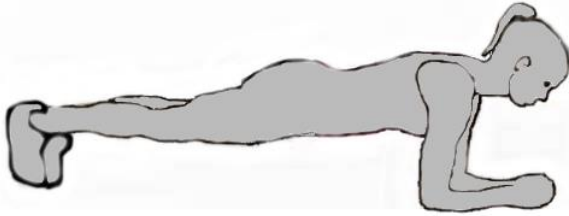
Body Resistance Exercises

Body resistance exercises help players to build strength. Many coaches overlook the importance of these exercises as they assume players are naturally building muscle, however as players begin to grow, it is important that they engage in body resistance exercises to engage muscles that might not regularly be engaged on the soccer field. Muscle imbalances – where one muscle is quite strong but its opposite muscle (the muscle that controls the opposite movement) is quite weak – are very common in soccer players and put them at risk for a number of injuries. The following resistance exercises provide a platform to allow players to develop their strength. It's important to note that at the U9/U10 age, players should not be encouraged to lift any type of weights as it can have negative repercussions on the developing body, particularly if form is not correct. Body resistance exercise is sufficient strength training for this age and will allow players to maintain muscle as they begin to grow.

With resistance exercises, it's important to start slowly and focus on form. Aim for one set of 15 reps per exercise but stop sooner if form begins to deteriorate. Once an athlete is able to do 15 reps with the correct form, aim to build up to three sets of 15 repetitions for each exercise.⁴⁸ It is essential that the coach watch players form closely and not allow players to get away with using incorrect form. Doing strengthening exercises with the wrong form can increase a player's risk of injury and frequently reduces the muscle building value of the task.

⁴⁸ Riewald, Scott & Cinea, Keith. Strength Training for Youth Athletes. National Strength and Conditioning Association Education Department.

Planks



Planks are among the most valuable body resistance exercises as they work the large majority of key muscles in the body. To do a plank correctly, the back must be flat and the core abdominal, back, and butt muscles must be engaged. The neck should be in line with the spine. Players should be taught to hold this position and coaches must ensure that the player maintains

the form. Watch out for players who begin to curve their spine downward or lift their bum into the air – these are common ways that players compensate for muscle weaknesses in their core. If you see a player doing this you need to instruct them to get back into the correct form, and hold the position as long as they can stay in that form. We want to avoid encouraging players to perform this, or any resistance exercise with incorrect form as doing so will often exacerbate existing muscle imbalances.

Push Ups

Push Ups are another great exercise that help players to develop core strength and upper body strength. Players should begin in the lower position in the diagram, with only their toes and hands touching the ground. The player should then push up off their hands until their arms are extended, as shown in the top position in the diagram. The challenging part of this exercise is the lowering of the body back to the original position. It is critical that players lower themselves slowly to the starting position – with nothing other than their hands and toes touching the ground – and maintain a flat back throughout the exercise. Watch out for players who let their bodies hit the ground or who do not extend their arms fully when they push up. If a player is using incorrect form, the coach must stop them as they are not building any useful muscle and are potentially increasing their risk of injury. If a player is unable to perform pushups as above, the coach can have the player attempt pushups from their knees – however you must still ensure that the player has a completely flat back and that the hips do not flex during the push up.

Sit Ups

Sit Ups predominantly target the upper abdominal region, which provides strength during throw-ins and assists players in maintaining core strength. While less important than planks or push



ups, sit ups can still be a useful tool.

When players are performing sit ups, it is often a good idea to have them put their hands on their foreheads (with the back of each hand on the forehead) or holding onto their ears, rather than behind the head, to avoid them pulling on their necks. Players must keep their heads steady and should be lifting the body from the abdominals. The coach must watch to ensure that players are keeping a straight back and maintaining a steady head throughout the exercise.

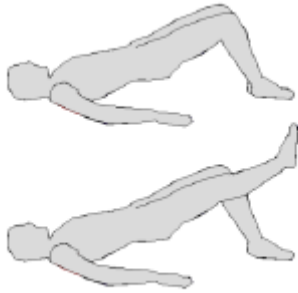
Lunges



Lunges help to build key leg muscles as well as core strength. When a player is doing lunges, it is critical that the back knee does not touch the ground and that the front knee does not extend past the toes of the front foot. The best way to instruct players on this is that they should be able to see the toes on their leading foot while in the upright position. Players should

keep their hands on the back of the head, their core engaged, and their body upright throughout the lunges. The Coach must watch for players who are allowing their back knee to touch the ground, extending their leading knee past their toes, are leaning their body forward, or who are putting their hands on their leading leg. There should be no steps between lunges. All of these are dangerous deviations from the correct form and not only dramatically reduce the efficacy of the exercise, but also put the player at risk for injury by reinforcing existing muscle imbalances.

Bridges



Bridges are a critical exercise for hip and core strength. Players frequently have difficulty with bridges because they target an area that is often weak. When doing the bridge, it is important that the player's hands are off to the side, not under their bum. Additionally, the player must maintain the correct formation – holding the body in alignment (flat) from the chest to the knee. The legs should not be touching one another but should be fairly close. Once a player is consistently able to perform a bridge in alignment for at least 3 reps, the coach can introduce a leg extension to that player. A leg extension requires the player to maintain form while raising one

leg up from the knee (the knee remains in alignment with the body and other knee) and holding the position. The player must then slowly lower the leg to the starting position and repeat. Players should do this an equal number of times with each leg. Coaches must ensure that the player maintains flat hips and does not let one sag or drop when they lift their leg, as that is a sign that the player is not yet strong enough to use the correct muscles and is activating the wrong muscles. Using the wrong muscles will only exacerbate existing weaknesses, so the player should be instructed to go back to the standard bridge or reduce reps to an amount that she can perform with the correct form.

Squats



Squats are a great exercise for building leg strength. To correctly perform a squat a player must maintain a straight back while lowering his body as if he is sitting in a chair. It is very important that the feet are shoulder width apart, facing forward, and that the player does not allow his knees to extend past his toes while doing a squat. He should be able to see his toes at all time. The coach must watch to ensure that the player is lowering his bum, maintaining a straight back, and

is keeping his knees from extending past his toes. Squats help players to develop key lower body strength that will allow them to maximize their utility on the field. As the player grows, his strength will continue to develop. Engaging in these exercises will help to ensure that the player is developing all his muscles and reduce the chances of injury provoking muscle imbalances.

Toe Raises



Toe raises work the calves and are very useful to the soccer player who must stay on her toes and depends on her body's ability to respond to the ever changing nature of the game. To perform a toe raise, a player should stand on one foot, with the knee bent. Her other foot should be behind her but not touching the foot on the ground. The player should slowly raise her plant foot until she is on the ball of the foot. She must then SLOWLY lower her body back down until her plant foot is on the ground. The coach must watch players to ensure that they are coming down very slowly, as that is when they are going to build muscle. Players frequently plop down, in an uncontrolled or fast motion to compensate for a lack of strength. That is the key strength that we are trying to build through toe raises, so it is essential that players are not allowed to speed through the process of lowering the body back down. The coach must watch each player and should have them redo any toe raises that are improperly done.

The coach must also watch players to ensure that they do not allow the foot of their bent leg (the one in the air behind the player) to touch the foot or leg that they are using to perform the toe raises. Some players have a tendency to wrap their loose foot around the ankle of their plant foot (the one they are strengthening). Avoid allowing players to do this as it can change the player's center of gravity and thereby diminish the effectiveness of the strengthening exercise.

Endurance

Endurance for the U9/U10 player is centered on the ability to push the body to play hard. Endurance for soccer consists of short, quick bursts of speed, rather than extensive single speed running. Under no circumstances should U9/U10 players be introduced to endurance training through long runs or similar activities commonly used by adults to increase endurance. All endurance building for U9/U10 players should come through activities and games that include the ball. These activities should place physical and mental demands on the players that require players to push themselves physically. Players should be a bit out of breath when the activity ends, but should never be at the point where they are experiencing physical distress.

Coaches will likely find that some U9/U10 players still engage in the U7/U8 practice of going 100% and then flopping down on the ground when they are tired. The coach can help players to remain on their feet and stay engaged in the activity through positive coaching and encouragement. As players are getting stronger and the game is getting faster at the U9/U10 age, it is very important that players not remain on the ground where they are at risk of injury.

Range of Motion Flexibility

Range of Motion and Flexibility are key to athletic performance on the soccer field and injury prevention. Beginning at U9/U10, coaches should incorporate exercises into each practice and game to assist players with maintaining and building their range of motion and flexibility. All ASC coaches should follow the guidance in the club's injury prevention documentation and ensure that athletes stretch after every practice and game. The stretches outlined in the documentation are

designed for athletes and coaches to utilize beginning at the U9/U10 age group. Additionally, the following is an excerpt on the importance of range of motion and flexibility from a US Youth Soccer article titled Benefits of Stretching⁴⁹:

An athlete can benefit in many ways from stretching. The most common reason taught to athletes is that stretching increases flexibility, the ability to move joints through a full range of motion, thereby reducing the risk of injury. Unfortunately, the majority of athletes believe that they are invincible and that an injury will not happen to them. This attitude is reinforced when these athletes do not get injured. What many athletes and coaches do not understand is that by increasing flexibility, one's personal sprint speed, power, and strength can be optimized. For example, if a soccer player is able to move his/her leg further back during the preparatory phase of a shot, more power can be created.

Another example, more useful to a broad range of sports, is increasing speed. Although an individual's sprint speed can only be altered a little bit (due to genetic constraints), one way to help optimize personal speed is to increase range of motion. It is also important to realize that a stretched muscle will encounter less resistance from contraction and tension, thereby causing less energy needed to complete a movement. When athletes learn and understand these benefits, they are usually more apt to institute a stretching program.

Not only is teaching the benefits of stretching important, but also knowing the best time to stretch is key. A number of people believe that stretching before practice is all that is necessary for an athlete.

First of all, the muscles should be warm before stretching occurs. A coach should have the athletes break a sweat, usually doing a sport specific activity, and then do the stretching. To save some practice time, coaches might announce what will happen during the practice that day and/or review previous practices or competitions. One key mistake often made is over-stretching before practice. You want your athletes to have good range of motion for practice, but this is not the time to try to gain flexibility.

The best time for that is after practice or on their own. Doing a cool down jog and stretch after training allows athletes to stretch again when are warm and helps reduce next day muscle soreness. It also gives the team time together and provides some relaxation prior to leaving practice. Individuals who need additional stretching to further increase flexibility can be advised to do stretching at home. It does not have to take up too much time because it can be done while doing other things, like watching TV. You should remind the athletes that they still must utilize proper stretching techniques, even at home. Even though children do not place as much demand on their body as older athletes, learning the value and the habit of stretching at an early age may aid in their success later on in their career.

⁴⁹ Coaching Youth Sports. Benefits of Stretching. US Youth Soccer. Available at: http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/news/benefits_of_stretching/

Rhythm Exercises

Rhythm Exercises help players to develop coordination and flow in their movements. Rhythm in soccer essentially consists of purposeful actions performed in a rhythm (or pattern). Soccer is a game of rhythm, and the more movements a player can perform in a purposeful and coordinated manner, the better off he will be in his game. Specific coordination exercises, as well as ball skills and passing drills, can enhance this skill in U9/U10 athletes. You will be able to tell when a player is developing rhythm by a certain consistency in her motions. A few good activities for developing rhythm are tapping the ball between the feet and performing foot skills moves. It's important that the rhythms involve variations, as in a game doing the same thing over and over is not going to help the athlete to perform.

For example, a coach could have players tapping the ball back and forth between their feet, and on the coach's cue, players are to run to a different ball and start performing the taps again. A progression to this could be having the players performing specific foot skills moves on rhythm and then on the coach's cue, accelerating into space. Small space one touch passing is another way to enhance rhythm in players. Start the players off in pairs spread about four feet from their partner. Ask the players to pass back and forth and count how many passes they can make but let them know that they each get only one touch (the touch they use to pass the ball) and if the same player touches the ball twice in a row, or ball stops moving, they have to start counting over from the beginning. The players can move wherever they need to, but if they touch the ball more than once before their partner touches it, or if the ball stops moving, they must start over. Initially, it's not uncommon for this to be a challenge to the players, however within one or two 10 minute practice sessions you should begin to see rhythm develop.

The key skill that the coach should be looking for is that the player is moving his feet and making his touches on the ball as efficient as possible. Every step and every touch should have a purpose. It will take U9/U10 players much of the two year period to develop a consistent rhythm with their touches, but the development of this skill is invaluable in their long term development as a player.

Injury Prevention & Healthy Routine

Regular Warm Up

At U9/U10 coaches must begin to introduce players to the concept of a regular warm up. A warm up should be included at the start of both practices and game. By the end of U9/U10, players should understand the fundamental parts of a dynamic warm up, and the coach should consistently include it in team events. The warm up should consist of a short jog to warm up the body, followed by dynamic (on the move) stretching. At practices, coaches should implement the ASC injury prevention program as part of the warm up, ensuring that they cover all parts of the program correctly at each practice.

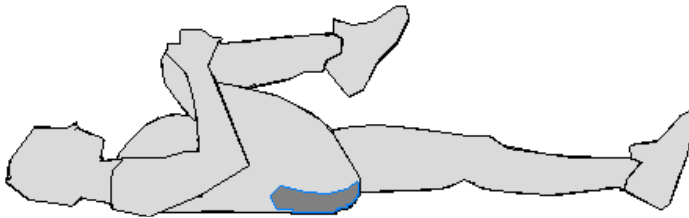
During the U9 year, work to introduce players to the parts of the injury prevention program, ensuring they understand the different activities and are able to execute them with the correct form. By U10, players should be running through the warm up in its entirety at each team event. Prior to games, a modified version of the injury prevention program –focused on a quick jog, dynamic stretching, a few basic agility activities, and then a dribbling warm up, should be

implemented. It is important that the coach is vigilant about players' form. With incorrect form, the warm up will be ineffective.

Cool Down

The often forgotten but critically important cool down is key to developing healthy players. After each practice and game, players should participate in a 10 minute cool down focusing on slowing down the body's breathing and heart rate. The cool down can include a short jog, stretching, and potentially some simple strengthening. Among the stretches that should be included in the cool down are:

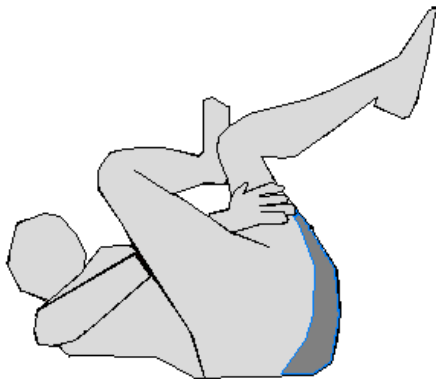
Single & Double Knee to Chest (30 Seconds x 2 Reps)



The player should lie on his back and first lift one knee to his chest as shown. He should then repeat with the second leg. Finally, he should pull both legs up to his chest and hold both in that position for two reps. The

player should feel the stretch in the area indicated in dark grey on the diagram.

Figure Four Piriformis Stretch (30 Seconds x 2 Reps)



The figure four piriformis stretch is another key stretch for soccer players. The piriformis tends to get tight and thus it is important that players regularly perform this stretch. To perform it, the player should lie on her back with both legs bent (so the bottom of the foot is on the floor). The player should then lift one foot and place the ankle of that foot onto the knee of her other leg. The player should then reach around the leg still on the ground and pull it up towards the player's chest (as shown in the diagram). The player should feel the stretch in the dark grey area on the diagram.

Butterfly Stretch (30 Seconds x 2 Reps)



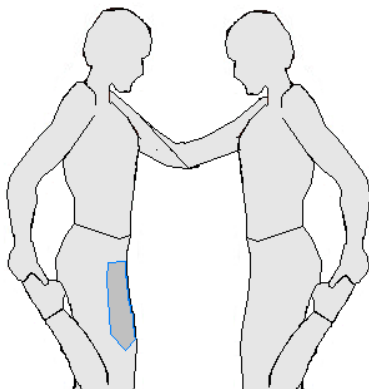
Players should perform the butterfly stretch as shown in the picture. When performing this stretch the back must be straight and the feet together. The coach must ensure that they don't bounce their legs or curve their backs while doing this stretch. Players often attempt to round their shoulders during this stretch, so the coach needs to be vigilant to ensure that players are leaning forward from the hips, not by curving the spine.

Calf Stretch (30 Seconds x 2 Reps)



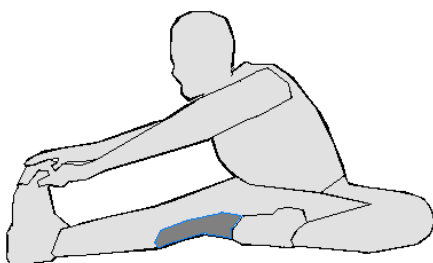
Make sure that the player keeps her hips level and her bottom foot flat on the ground. Frequently, the coach will see the hip on the side where the players foot has been lifted dip down. It is very important that the coach be attentive to this issue and ensure that the player corrects their position to bring the hips back into the correct position (level with one another). The player should feel the stretch in the back of the calf.

Quad Stretch (30 Seconds x 2 Reps)



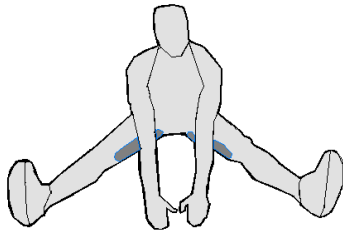
For the quad stretch, the player should be instructed to keep her knees together and should not allow her knees to come apart during the stretch. This is very important as having the leg winging out to the side increases the risk of injury to the ACL. The player should feel the stretch in the dark grey area on the front of the thigh in the diagram.

Figure Four Hamstring Stretch (30 Seconds x 2 Reps)

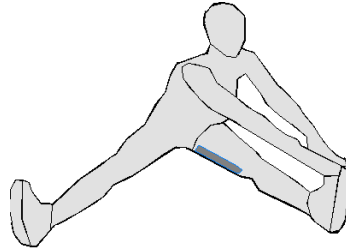


The figure four stretch helps players to stretch out tight hamstrings. The coach must ensure that the player does not round his back while doing this stretch. The player should bend forward at the waist, while keeping his back straight. The player should feel the stretch in the hamstrings.

Inner Thigh Stretch (30 Seconds x 2 Reps)



Like the above stretch, the coach must ensure that the player does not round his back while stretching the inner thighs. The player should bend forward at the waist, while keeping his back straight, and



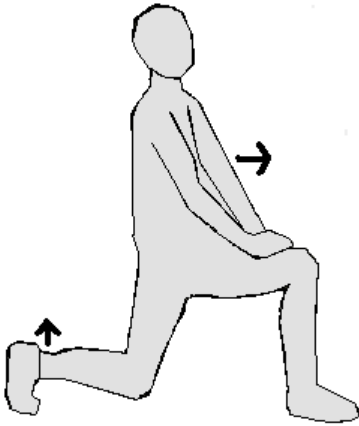
reach forward without curving the back. The player should feel the stretch in the inner thigh.

The player should do this stretch to the right.

the center, to the left, and to

Hip Flexor Stretch (30 Seconds x 2 Reps)

Hip flexors are notoriously tight on soccer players, which is why it is so important that they are regularly and correctly stretched out. Tight hip flexors restrict a player's range of motion and can limit their effectiveness on the field. To perform this stretch the player should position herself as shown in the diagram. She should lean forward from the hips, keeping the back straight and the hips square with the shoulders. If possible, the player should grab her left ankle with her left hand and lift the ankle towards the body. After completing two reps of 30 seconds, the player should switch positions, placing the right leg behind her and the left leg in front of her body. She will then need to grab her right ankle with her right hand and lift the ankle towards the body.



Nutrition

At the U9/U10 age, coaches should discuss with players the importance of fueling their bodies. If a coach decides to do half time snacks during the team games, they should request that parents provide only healthy, fruit for snacks. During tournaments, coaches should ask parents to pack a lunch for their child and provide guidance to parents on types of healthy carbohydrates, proteins, and fats that could be included in a lunch. Aim to avoid anything fried, salty, or fatty as they will likely contribute to poor performance on the field. If the team is going out to eat between games, focus on finding a location – such as Panera – that provides some healthy choices and give players some suggestions for healthy options. In all situations, coaches should praise players for making healthy choices, but should be careful not to criticize players who make less desirable choices.

It's very important that coaches focus on the relationship between food and energy, rather than food and appearance. A coach should never make a comment about a player's weight factors that could contribute to weight. The focus must always be on player performance attributes, and not physical attributes. Nutrition should be viewed as a tool for performance – instead the coach should

focus on the role food plays in allowing us to be stronger, more powerful, more energetic, and to have better endurance.

Hydration

Hydration is perhaps the most critical factor that can impact players on a daily basis. At this age, players can begin to take more responsibility for their own hydration. Players should be taught that they need to be hydrating starting the day before the game. In the days before the game, players should be hydrating frequently to ensure they have enough fuel in their tanks to perform. This is important regardless of the temperature outside, though players may have to drink additional water in warmer situations as they may lose additional liquid through sweat. Players can begin to monitor their own hydration level, as discussed in Part I (Overall Player Development) of this set of guides. To encourage players to hydrate, the coach can ask players how much water they drank the day before the game and give high fives and praise to those players who remembered to hydrate. This positive reinforcement will encourage players to adopt healthy habits.

Conclusion

By incorporating these elements into training sessions and games, the coach can ensure that the players she coaches are developing in a physically healthy environment where they will be able to fulfill their potential. The role of the coach in respect to the fitness and health elements at the U9/U10 level should be one of active engagement and enthusiasm. Players at this age feed off the energy and belief of the coach, and consistency between verbal messages and actions is key to players embracing the importance of these health and fitness components of the game. By incorporating these elements at the U9/U10 level, coaches will be able to help players to maximize their potential and minimize the impact of growth and coordination changes that will be occurring in the coming years.

Coaching U9/U10 Tactical Skills

Introduction

Tactics are the fourth priority for the U9/U10 age group, but still are very relevant and should be incorporated into practices and games. Players at this age are beginning to be able to move the ball about the field with greater precision and intensity. Additionally, cognitive changes are increasing their ability to process and respond to multiple stimuli. This shows in their awareness of their own position in relation to others, as well as their ability to adjust their actions to respond to the actions of another person. Coaches must keep in mind that our objective is not simply that the players can mechanically perform actions, but rather our goal is for them to develop the abstract understanding that will allow them to respond to any situation they encounter on the field. The only way to truly impart this knowledge on players at the U9/U10 level is for the coach to guide them to develop the understanding of the concepts below.

Discussion

Players at this age should be encouraged to act on their observations. Initially players will make numerous mistakes, however if encouraged to continue making decision and acting on their observations, they will quickly begin to develop an understanding and awareness of how to most

effectively respond to a given situation. While it can be easy to get frustrated when the center back on your team is routinely allowing players behind her, the coach should remain calm and use questions (such as “where should you be right now?” or “Who’s the furthest opponent back right now?”) to encourage the player to develop her tactical knowledge . Encouraging players through questions to make these decisions allows them to feel empowered and allows them to develop understanding at a rate much faster than if the coach simply shouted directions to them (such as “Mark that player!”). Coaches should encourage awareness at every level, praising a player for realizing that they need to make a recovery run or attempting to switch the field, even if the action is not as timely as one might have wished or is ultimately unsuccessful.

Principles of Attack
Penetration
Support
Width

Principles of Defense
Pressure
Support (Cover)

General Tactics
Verbal & Visual Communication
Small group shape in 2's and 3's while attacking and defending

General Tactics Cont.
Set Plays
Playing on/around the Ball as a Group with a Purpose

Attacking
Creating Width in the Attack
Channel Concepts (Flank & Central Channels)
Weak Side
Changing the Point of Attack
Thirds
Triangle Shape
Combinations
1 st & 2 nd Attacker Roles
2v1 Attacking

Defending
1 st & 2 nd Defender Roles
1v1 Defending
Defending in Pairs
Distance, Angle, & Support by 2 nd Defender
Goal Side & Ball Side Positioning

Attacking Runs
Checking Runs
Overlapping Runs
Withdrawing Runs

Defending Runs
Tracking Runs
Marking Runs
Covering Runs

U9/U10 Tactical Guide⁵⁰

⁵⁰ US Youth Soccer. Spatial Awareness Guide. 2014. PG. 14.

Do not be locked in by the age group while coaching the principles of play. Take a step by step approach toward awareness of and the use of space on the field of play. When players can grasp the concepts then coach them. If the players are not ready for a tactical idea then wait until the next season.

Reinforce the spatial concepts previously taught to the children. Earlier they learned about the halfway line that divides the field horizontally into north and south ends. That is a relatively simple concept to be learned since the line is marked on the field. The next line is conceptual only and initially will be difficult for the children to comprehend. This line runs from the center of the goalmouth through the penalty mark, the center mark, the next penalty mark and it ends in the center of the opposite goalmouth. This intangible center line divides the field vertically into east and west sides (Fig. 10). U9/U10 players tend to play predominately in a north ↓ south direction. They can, and should be expected to also play east ↔ west. Coach the players to attack across the abstract center line with a diagonal dribble or pass or a square pass.

From this age group onward the option of air space becomes increasingly possible. While soccer is best played on the ground, playing the ball in the air is often the right choice.

The vertical game prevails with children in this age group. Subsequently, teach them well how to play within and across the channels on the field. As they progress in conceptualizing the channels then it becomes important to establish the view of the thirds on the field.

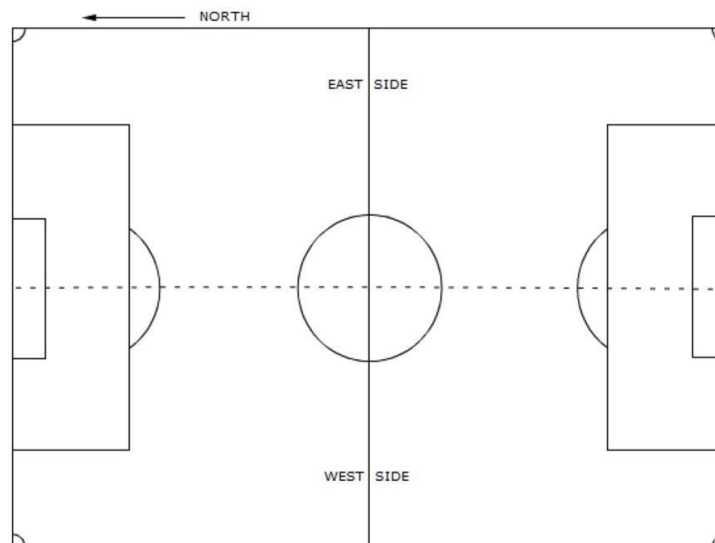


FIGURE 10 THE CENTER LINE DIVIDES THE FIELD VERTICALLY

Attacking

Principles: Penetration, Support and, Width

Coaches should continue to reinforce the attacking principles of play from the earlier ages – Penetration, support, and width. At the U9/U10 age, players have the ability to grasp these concepts in a much greater capacity than in the earlier age groups, and as such, it is essential that the coach routinely include them in training activities. Each of these skills increases in complexity at the

U9/U10 level as the game increased in complexity, and the coach should use and should encourage players to use the correct terminology (penetration, support, and width) when speaking both on and off the field.

Creating Width in the Attack: Channels – Weak Side – Switching the Point of Attack⁵¹

The vertical spaces stretching from goal line to goal line are the channels of the field (Fig. 12). They are the central channel and the two flank channels (often called the flanks). Youngsters play mostly a vertical soccer game, so the concept of channels should be logical to them. Channels are useful when giving young players the notions associated with width or switching the point of attack (Fig. 11).

For attacking players to stay connected to each other in the channels when the point of attack is wide on one flank, the weak-side⁵² players should move in toward the central channel until the ball is moved back toward the middle (see attacking run #7: “Withdrawing”).

Generally width – achieved by intelligent use of the channels – is most applicable to the build-up phase of the attack. When a team attempts to strike at goal, chances must be taken and decisions made quickly. As a rule, the attack should maintain width and reestablish it as quickly as possible whenever it is lost.

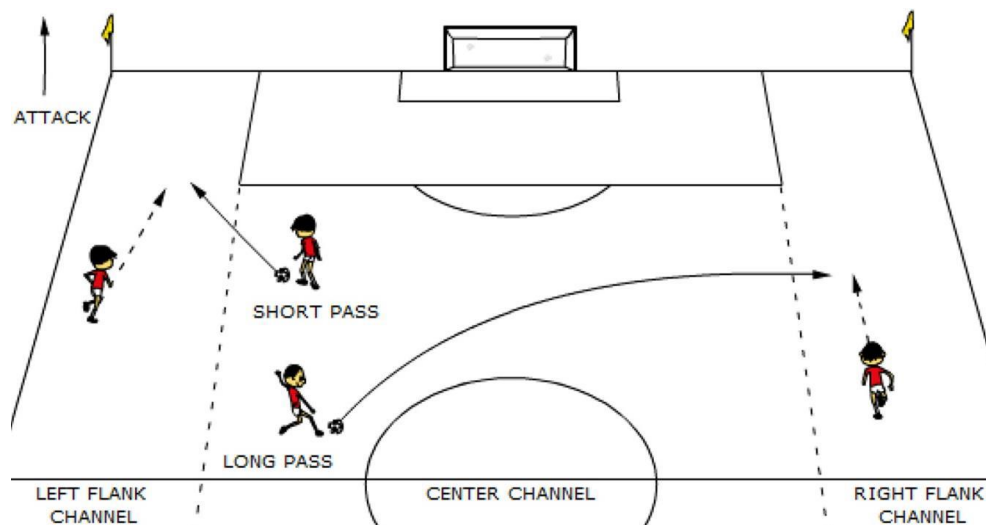


FIGURE 11 SWITCHING THE POINT OF ATTACK

An attack covering three channels, while useful, is not as important as filling the weak side when the ball changes channels. Having attacking players staying wide on both flanks means passing distances, supporting angles and penetrating runs are more difficult. All three factors are influenced by the spatial awareness (judging distances) of the players.

Note that the long pass depicted in the diagram above is directly influenced by the player’s

⁵¹ US Youth Soccer. Spatial Awareness Guide. 2014. PG. 15 & 16.

⁵² The “weak side” of the field is the side of the field without the ball. The side of the field that the ball is on is called the strong side. As the ball moves about the field, the weak and strong sides of the field will switch.

technical ability (see the discussion of technical-tactical radius in Part I of this guide for more information).

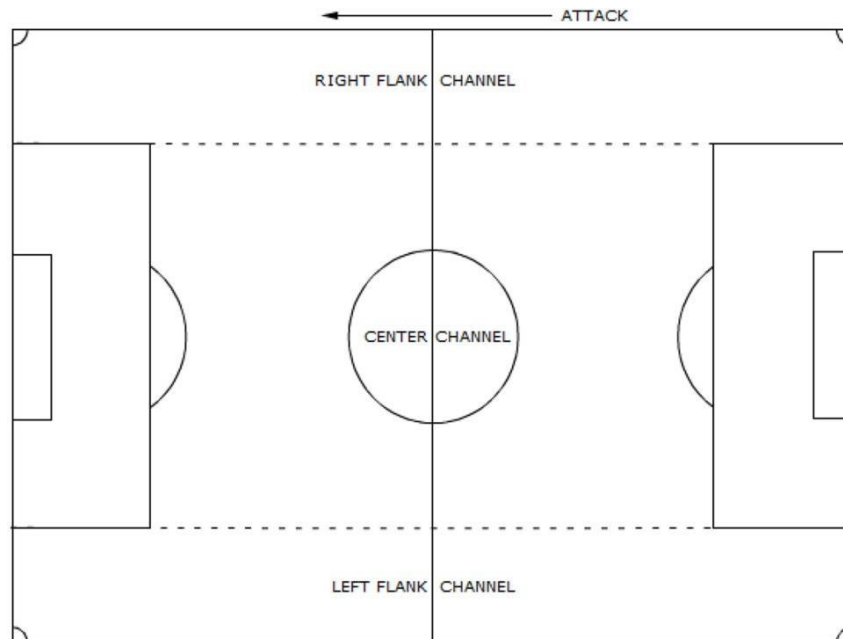


FIGURE 12 THE CHANNELS ON A SOCCER FIELD

Thirds⁵³

The thirds of the field are horizontal spaces stretching from touchline to touchline. They are the defending third, midfield third and the attacking third (Fig. 13). The midfield third is the same for both teams, while the defending third for one team is the attacking third for the other. Once players understand the halves of the field and the east and west sides of the field then begin teaching the thirds of the field. Using thirds of a field is useful for coaching the idea of playing through the 'midfield' area. The basic strategies performed in each third help make for an attractive and well-played game.

⁵³ US Youth Soccer. Spatial Awareness Guide. 2014. PG. 16 & 17.

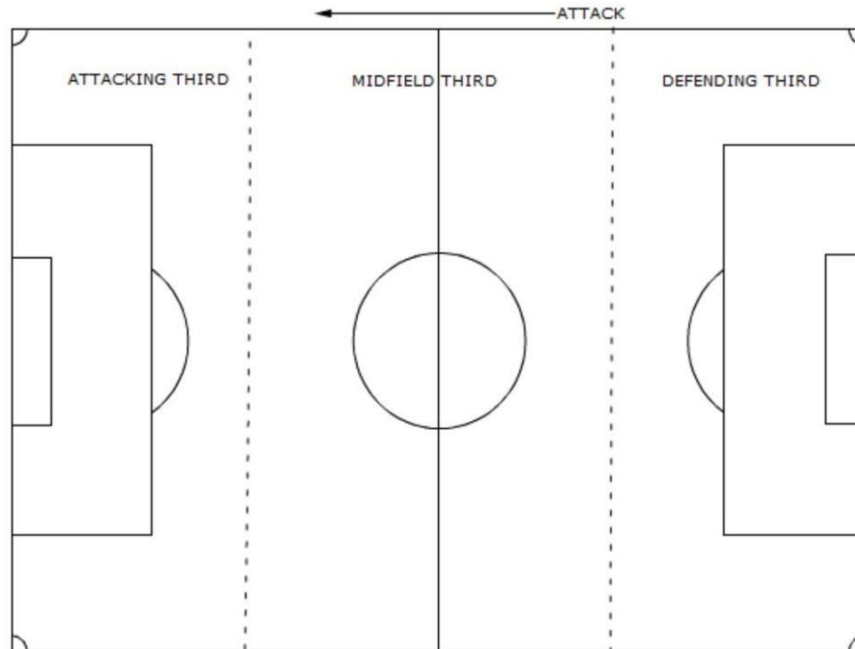


FIGURE 13 THE THIRDS ON A SOCCER FIELD

Players having progressed in this stair step approach to learning the game will now be using all three channels of the field when attacking (Fig. 12).

From U9/U10 onward teach the players to assess the balance between playing safely and taking risks through the thirds of the field (Fig. 14). Generally play simply and safely in the defending third. In the midfield third recognize the moment for a safe or risky move based on the situation. The rule of thumb though in the midfield third is that while on your own half of the field, think safety. Once over the halfway line players should look to take more risks in order to penetrate into the attacking third. In the attacking third risk more in order to create scoring chances.

The boundary lines, the halfway line and other markings on the field help young players know where they are on the field. The new spatial concepts, without any concrete markings, are the channels and thirds of the field. These are abstract parts of a soccer field seen only on diagrams and in the mind's eye. It is challenging to get the bird's eye view⁵⁴ of these unmarked lines on a soccer field into the conceptual understanding of youngsters. For players, knowing where they are on the field in relation to the channels and thirds helps them with tactical decision making. This includes the continual decision between safety and risk.

⁵⁴ The bird's eye view of a soccer field can be taught through the use of video games or watching soccer on television.

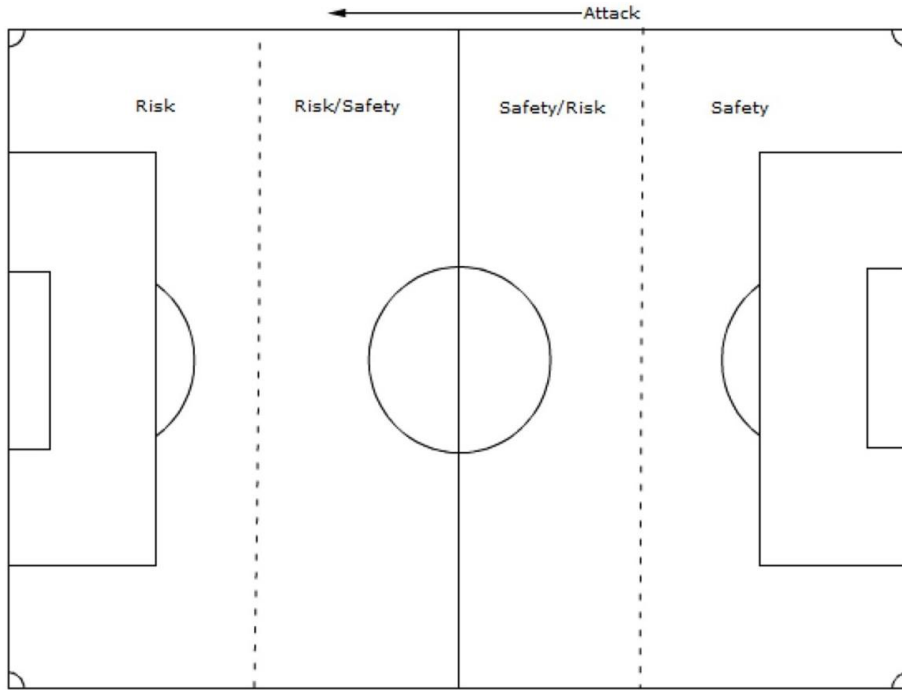


FIGURE 14 THE BALANCE OF SAFETY AND RISK

Combinations⁵⁵

When on the attack in order to play cohesively through the channels and thirds of the field, players should regularly perform passing combinations (Fig. 15). These combinations can come from the proper positioning (distance and angle of support) of two attacking players (see attacking run #1 “Checking”), but sometimes also in a group of three forming the shape of a triangle (Fig. 16). Improve their recognition and quick use of passing lanes (see attacking run #6 “Overlapping”).

⁵⁵ US Youth Soccer. Spatial Awareness Guide. 2014. PG. 17 & 18.

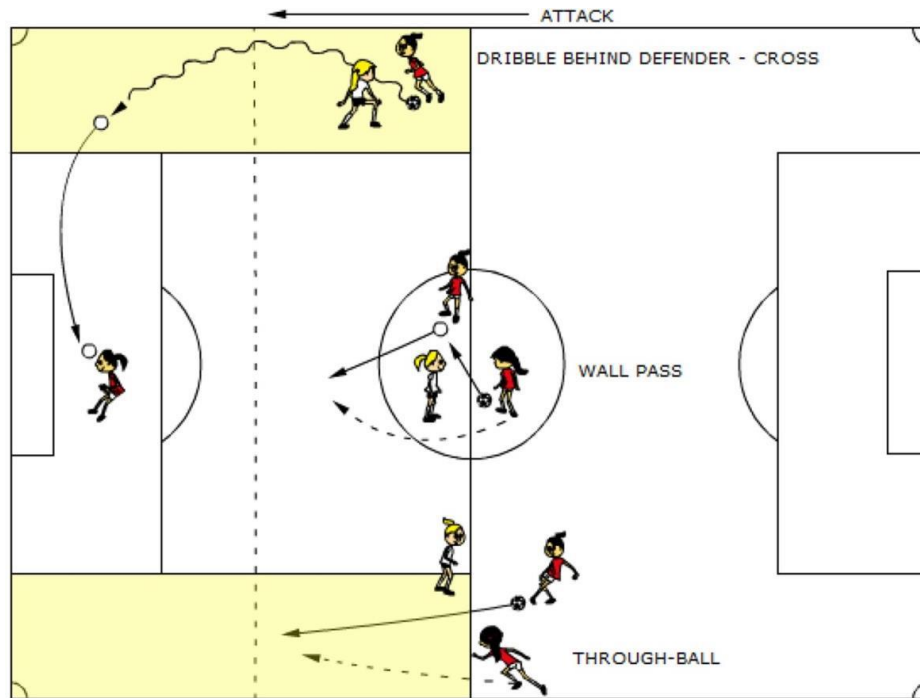


FIGURE 15 FLANK PLAY AND COMBINATIONS

Group Shape: the Triangle

The group shape of a triangle requires the ability to judge distance and angle (abstract thought). Having a triangle around the ball, whether attacking or defending, is a key tactical shape. However, it requires three players to read the game the same way at the same time. That means seeing into the future (temporal) and understanding space (conceptual). The use of the space will impact the distance and angle the players form in a triangle in relation to each other and the ball. Begin teaching the triangle shape at this age – just be patient. Remember that each kid will get the picture in his or her own time. Creating triangles around the ball while attacking will give a chance for at least one of these penetration opportunities to present itself (Fig. 15 and Fig. 16).

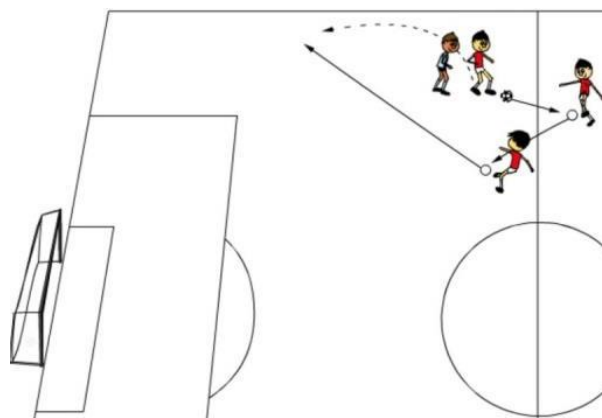


FIGURE 16 TRIANGLE ATTACKING SHAPE

2v1 Attacking

Players should be exposed to many 2v1 attacking situations during U9/U10 training sessions. This is a key concept that encompasses the core elements of attacking in soccer – moving with the ball and moving off the ball to provide options. Many U9/U10 players will remain in one spot initially when a teammate has the ball, rather than moving to a position where they are open to receive a pass. The coach must work with players to develop an understanding of the importance of movement off the ball and what it means to be open to receive a pass. Concepts such as passing back to a player who is closer to your team’s goal (also known as 360 passing) , combinations such as the wall pass and the give and go, and the like are essential topics to infuse into U9/U10 training sessions on a regular basis. Learning to look up while in possession of the ball – including while shielding, provide first attackers with the opportunity to identify and utilize their fellow attacker as they work together to advance the ball. Additionally, the importance of communication is a topic that coaches must emphasize as players begin to execute more complex two-player attacks that require direct and effective communication.

1st and 2nd Attacker Roles

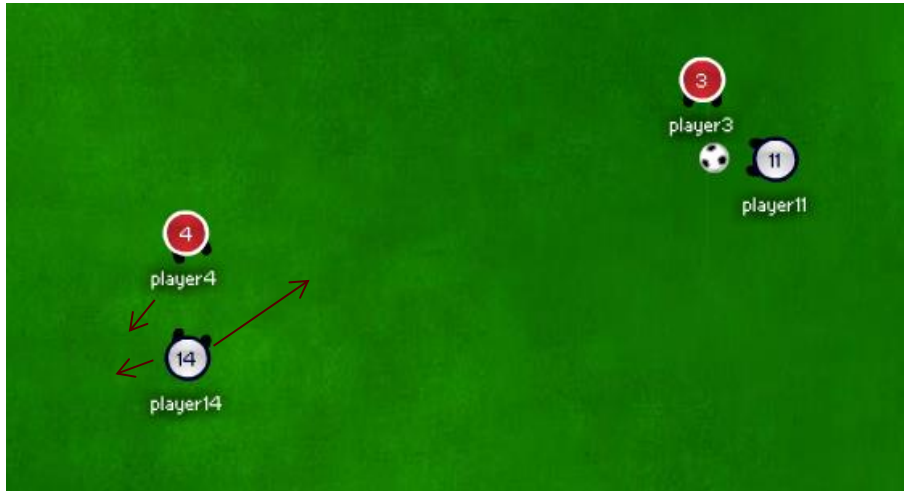
The first attacker is the player in possession with the ball. Her primary objective is to advance the ball towards the opposing team’s goal. Ideally, in doing this, she will be able to penetrate the opponent’s defense (remember, penetration is the act of moving the ball past one or more defenders towards the goal you are trying to score on). There are three methods by which a player can penetrate the defense. The first is to dribble, the second is to pass, and the third is to shoot the ball to the goal. At the U9/U10 level, players should be encouraged to try to take players on and use dribbling to penetrate as much as possible. Passing and shooting are secondary options – which should still be encouraged, alongside the importance of dribbling. While the first attacker works to penetrate the defense, the second attacker is providing the next principle – support. The second attacker should always be just one pass away – indicating that this player should always be moving to ensure she is open to receive a pass from the first attacker. This position is key and the ability of the second attacker to move off the ball, understand when she is and is not available to receive a pass, and communicate with the first attacker are essential to success. The coach should work with players to ensure that, when in the role of first attacker, they understand the importance of knowing where the second attacker is located. The second attacker holds primary responsibility for ensuring that the first attacker has a viable passing option, and for communicating that option to the first attacker.

Attacking Runs

1. **Checking** – (away from and back to the ball). The idea of making a movement in one direction, stopping, and then sprinting off in the opposite direction can be introduced at U9/U10 and then clearly a part of the training plan from U11/U12 onward.

Checking should draw the defender away from an area in which a player wishes to receive a ball. By

gaining an extra yard or so of space, the player will have more time to decide what to do next. Space = Time.



The 2nd attacker (white #14) makes a run away from the ball, drawing the defender marking her (red #4) away from the ball. D2 = the 2nd attacker then quickly makes a run back towards the ball – into the space he/she created, leaving the defender behind).

6. **Overlapping** – (run from behind a teammate in possession to receive a pass from that player). The tactic could be taught from the U9/U10 age group and onward. The problem for U9/U10 players with this tactic will be patience – theirs and their parents, and possibly their coaches, too. However, players who are not expected to run-n-gun all the time could add the overlap to their attack.

Overlapping is a very common tactic employed by a full back when joining an attack. The attacking team is often on a counter attack when utilizing an overlap; they are looking to press as many players forward as possible. Having a full back pass the winger means the defending player, be it the opposition winger or full back, now has to consider which player to be primarily concerned about; the player on the ball or the overlapping player? Central midfielders will sometimes make overlapping runs which creates the same problem and confusion in the opposition defense.



White #5 makes a run behind and beyond the 1st attacker to receive the ball in an advantageous position.



7. *Withdrawing* – (into a wide channel). A player in a flank channel getting ‘sideways on’ or ‘backside to the outside’ type run. ‘Withdrawing’ is to get out as wide as possible when on the attack; get some chalk on your boots. Even U9/U10 players can begin to grasp that idea, especially if they get passes from teammates when they are wide on the field and unmarked. However, the idea of withdrawing in order to create space for a teammate in the central channel of the field may not click for the kids. It’s an indirect reward for a 10-year-old. For example, Logan says, “Yeah my run opened up Derek, but he got the ball instead of me. I made the run, why didn’t I get the ball?”

The defending team will be looking to keep a minimal distance between each player as to shrink the field for an attack. The attack should look to do the opposite; stretch the field to create width in attack and holes in the defensive line.





Here, red #2 is aware of white #7 looking to get past him on the wing. The defender (#2) tries to stop this which draws him out wide, leaving space through the middle. Likewise, white #11 made a similar run opening up the field even more.

Defending

Principles: Pressure and Support (Cover)

Coaches should continue to reinforce the defensive principles of play from the earlier ages – Pressure and support (aka “cover”). At the U9/U10 age, players have the ability to grasp these concepts in a much greater capacity than in the earlier age groups, and as such, it is essential that the coach routinely include them in training activities. Each of these skills increases in complexity at the U9/U10 level as the game increased in complexity. Players at this age group are beginning to have the ability to regularly –though not yet consistently- apply these concepts in games. When teaching players about support/cover, the coach may want to encourage players to use phrases like “cover my back” or have the first defender who has contained the opponent say to the back “got my back?” and the back confirm “you’ve got cover!” before having the first defender tackle the ball. These little communications are essential to success and by encouraging players to incorporate them into their play now, they will become second nature by the end of the age group. The coach should use and should encourage players to use the correct terminology (pressure and support or cover) when speaking both on and off the field.

The 1st & 2nd Defender⁵⁶

Defending in pairs (see defending run #4 “marking”) should be an improving talent by the U9/U10 age group (Fig. 17). Distance and angle of support by the second defender are spatial concepts (see defending run #5 “covering”). Teach this tactic in the defending third first and then move up the field in its execution. By

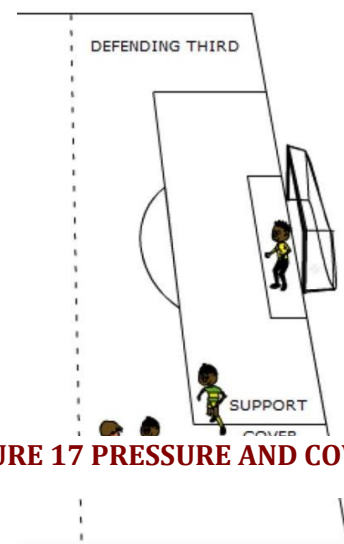


FIGURE 17 PRESSURE AND COVER

⁵⁶ US Youth Soccer. Spatial Awareness Guide. 2014. PG. 19.

all means teach players to give defensive cover anywhere on the field that they are pressuring the ball. It may be easier though for U9/U10 players to remember to provide cover when they are closer to the obvious concrete space (penalty area) near their goal (see defending run #3 “tracking”).

1v1 Defending (the First Defender)

Players must develop competency defending 1v1 during the U9/U10 age group. Players should be taught that as the first defender, they should approach the first attacker (player with the ball) at a bit of an angle, directing the player with the ball towards a sideline, away from teammates, or to the player’s weaker foot. The U9/U10 player should understand the importance of first containing the ball, slowing the first attacker and allowing the defending team to get back behind the first defender to provide ample support. Once the team has retreated to help with the defending effort and the first defender has cover, the second defender – who is providing that cover – should inform the first defender that she has cover. Once the first defender knows she has cover, she should then go in for the tackle with the objective of obtaining possession of the ball.

The speed at which the first defender closes down the first attacker is critical to success. The first defender should always approach the first attacker at an angle pushing the first attacker the direction the first defender wants her to go. As mentioned above, this is frequently towards a sideline, away from teammates, or to the attacker’s weaker foot. The first defender should move quickly to the area where the first attacker is located but once the first defender is within about 3-5 yards of the first attacker, she should get down low and reduce her speed to a level where she is fully under control and will be able to respond to any of the attacker’s actions. This helps to ensure that the first defender does not come in too quickly and overplay the first attacker – overplaying the attacker would give the attacker an opportunity to get by the defender. Once she has closed down the first attacker, the first defender should take the time to get her feet set and her hips in alignment while waiting for the best moment to make the tackle. The keys to success for a first defender can be summarized in three words – speed, timing, and angle.

Defending in Pairs

When defending in pairs, it is essential that players be aware that the first and second defender roles can switch very quickly. For example, if the player with the ball passes to a teammate, it is highly likely that the player who was the second defender before is now the first defender. As the roles of first and second defender switch, the player who is the second defender should always be moving back behind the first defender. The first defender meanwhile should always be on the player with the ball. These roles change as the ball moves between players. If the first defender gets beat, the second defender should step into the first defender role, while the prior first defender drops back and provides cover.

This change is depicted in the image on the left side of Figure 18 (below). Initially, when player 11 on the black team has the ball, player 11 on the red team is the closest player on the red team between black 11 and the red team’s goal → that makes him the first defender. As the first defender, red 11 closes down the space and stops black 11 from moving the ball forward. Meanwhile, player 12 on the red team, the second defender, steps into a position that allows him to

provide cover, should black 11 get past red 11, and also allows red 12 to quickly move to defend black 12, should black 11 pass the ball to black 12. The green dotted lines show the areas that red 12 is angled to protect. The picture on the right of Figure 18, shows how red 12 and red 11 would move should black 11 pass the ball to black 12. If the ball is passed, as indicated by the black dotted line, red 12 becomes the first defender and must quickly move to close down black 12. Meanwhile, red 11 becomes the second defender, and must drop back to ensure he has sufficient angle to provide cover for red 12, should black 12 get past him, while also staying in position to quickly defend black 11, should black 11 receive the ball back. Communication is essential for effective defending and players must be encouraged to talk and inform their teammates when they are providing cover and when they need help on defense.

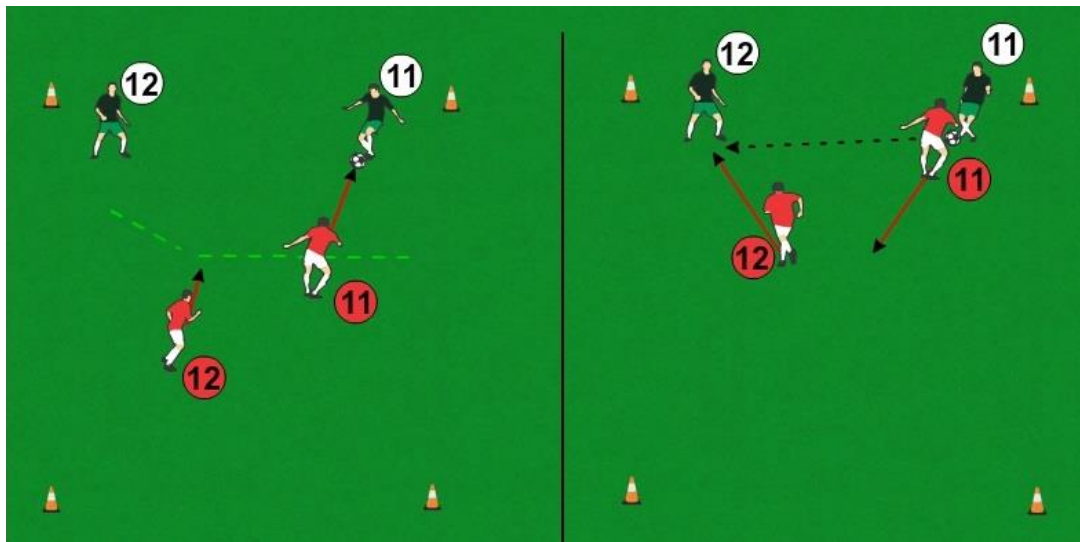


FIGURE 18 FIRST AND SECOND DEFENDER

Distance, Angle, and Support by 2nd Defender

The second defender must always be aware of the location of the ball, the location of the goal, the location of the second attacker, and the path that the first attacker could take if she beats the first defender. The second defender should be behind the first defender, and at an angle that would allow her to quickly stop the first attacker should she get by the second defender, while also ensuring that she could step quickly to the second attacker, should the first attacker pass the ball that direction. The position of the second defender is essential to providing effective support. In Figure 18 in the image on the left, player red 12 has established that the location where the two green dotted lines meet (where the black arrow is). This spot allows him sufficient time to provide cover, should black 11 get past red 11, while also remaining close enough to black 12 to ensure he can close down player black 12 should player black 11 pass the ball to black 12.

Goal-Side & Ball Side Defending⁵⁷

Goal-side defending occurs when the player gets his or her body between the ball and the goal. Ball side defending occurs when the player positions herself in such a way that she is able to prevent the

⁵⁷ US Youth Soccer. Spatial Awareness Guide. 2014. PG. 19.

player she is defending from getting possession of a pass. A player may be in both ball side and goal-side position in some situations depending on the angle of the defender in relation to the player with the ball, the offensive player being covered, and the goal.

Getting goal-side should be coached consistently from this stage of development onward (Fig. 18). Now add to the details of quality defending by coaching the players on how to get ball-side⁵⁸ as well as goal-side (Fig. 18). Correct positioning in regard to both goal-side and ball-side requires good judgment of distances and angles between oneself, the ball, opponents and your location on the field.

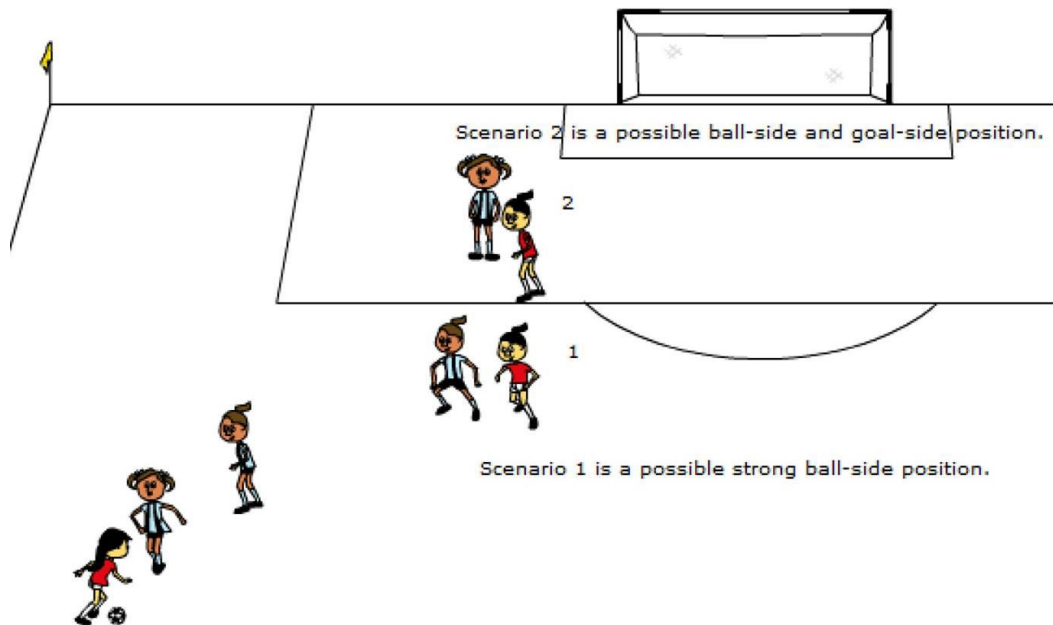


FIGURE 18 BALL-SIDE POSITIONING

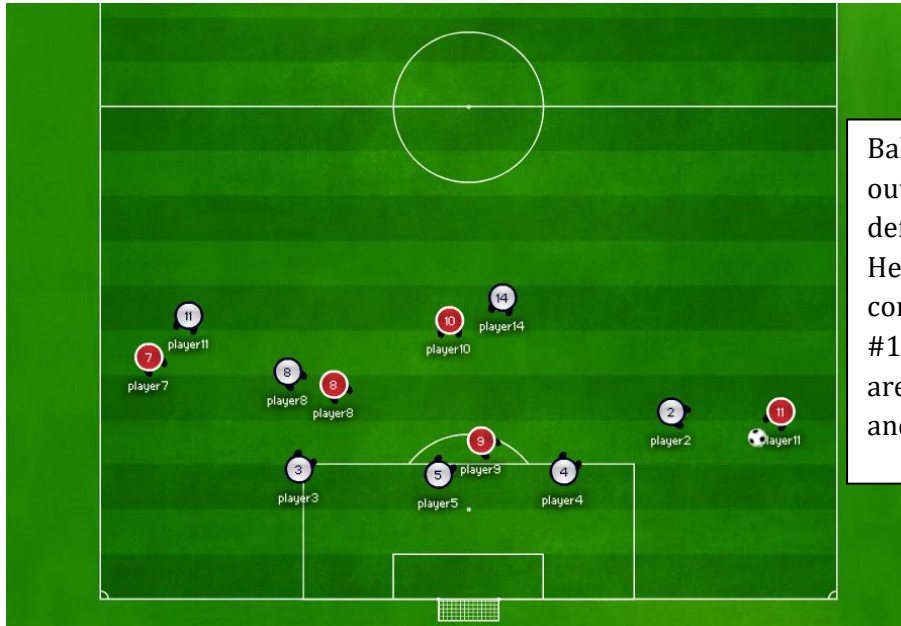
Defending Runs

3. **Tracking** – (moving with an opponent who has made a run to another part of the field). The straight forward notion of pick up an opponent and running with him or her when your team is defending is comprehensible to the U9/U10 age group.

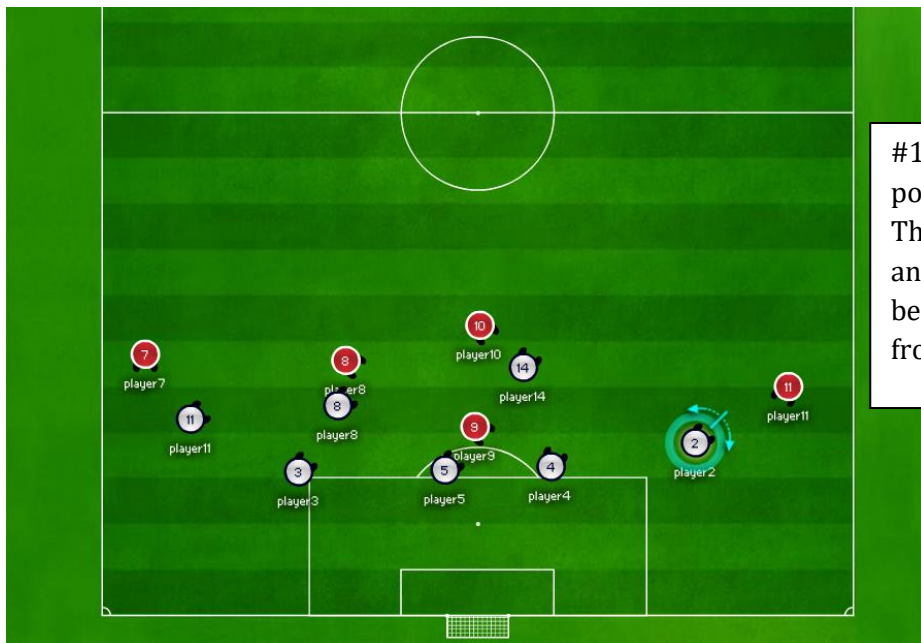
Tracking should demonstrate a balance between being aware of the runners and being aware of the positioning of the ball. While it is important to track the run of the attackers, the defender should also be aware of the player on the ball. This may give them an idea of when and where the attack

⁵⁸ Ball-Side: pertaining to that side of the field where the ball is.

will come from. However, if the defender is too focused on the ball, they will allow the 2nd and 3rd attackers to make runs which they have not tracked.



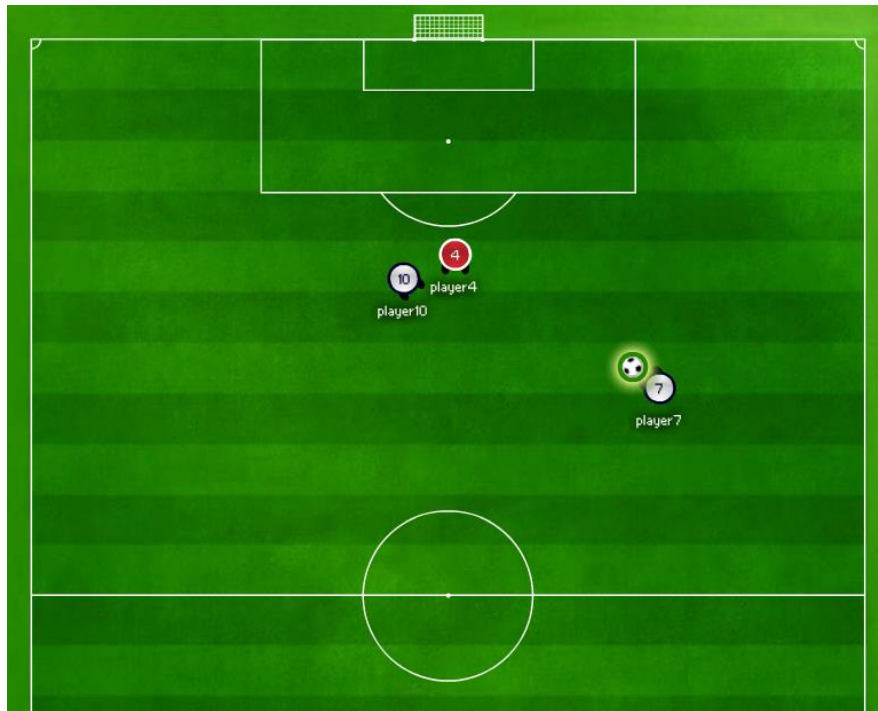
Balls coming in from an attack from out wide will often require the defending team to 'track back'. Here, the back 4 are trying to contain the threat on the ball with #11 and #9 while the midfielders are tracking the runs of the #7, #9 and #10.



#11, #8, #14 and #2 are all in better positions from where they started. They tracked the attackers' runs and were able to get goal side while being aware of the threat coming in from the ball out wide.

4. Marking – (keeping close to an opponent to prevent that opponent receiving a pass or getting off a pass or shot). Marking is concrete, but since it's off-the-ball, the skill can be taught at U9/U10, not sooner.

Marking players means the defender should stay close enough to an attacker so that they can intercept a pass or quickly contain play.



Here, red #4 is within touching distance of the 2nd attacker, white #10. Depending on where the attack is on the field, the distance between the defender and attacker may vary. Typically, the higher up the field the attack is the tighter (closer) the defending should be.

5. Covering – (when a 2nd defender provides cover [support] to the defender on the ball). Covering should be coached beginning with the U9/U10 age group. The coach will have to be patient though as the kids will often forget to recover in order to cover.

The idea of a covering defender is to provide support for the 1st defender. If the 1st defender gets beat, the 2nd defender(s) should be close enough to be able to step in and intercept or contain the attacker. Once this has happened there may be new covering defenders as the initial covering (2nd) defender is now the pressuring (1st) defender.



Here, the highlighted players are the 2nd defenders providing cover to the 1st defender who has closed down the player on the ball.

Conclusion

Tactical skills at U9/U10 will require repetition and reinforcement throughout the U9/U10 years. Consistent exposure to activities that incorporate tactical decision making during team training sessions is essential for players at this age group. Focusing on activities that work with two to three players per team is ideal at this age group as nearly all tactical concepts at this age group require a maximum of three players. Coaches should use positive reinforcement when teaching these concepts to ensure that players develop the confidence to take the risks required to master these new skills. Coaches should anticipate that goals will be scored against the team as they work to encourage players to take risks and try these concepts out in game situations, and should praise players frequently for their attempts to execute tactical concepts.

Also, coaches should note that 6v6 for U9/U10 players 6v6 is not a small-sided game. It is the BIG game for them. It is the 11 vs. 11 version of the game for U9/U10 teams. For this age group 4 vs. 4, 5 vs. 4 or 6 vs. 4, as well as the combinations from the U5/U6 and the U7/U8 age groups, is a small-sided game. Spatial awareness is partially developed by using small-sided games.

The Game

The U9/U10 Game: Regardless of the level of competition, these players must always play at least 50 percent of the match; they won't grow as players sitting on the bench. Through the course of the season expose the players to each position on the team during match play. Versatility is highly prized at the upper levels of the game.

Once the match begins, the coach should sit down and watch, and let the players do most of the talking during the match. The coach should speak up to praise them for doing something well and for trying what they have been taught in training sessions.

It is natural for children this young to be inconsistent in their match performance. For that matter, so are adult professional players. The difference between a professional soccer team and a U-10 team is simply that the pros make fewer mistakes, but they do make mistakes. Don't fret about inconsistent play with this age group. It's normal for a team to have highs and lows in match performance.

Basic Overview of the Field Size (6v6)

Players at the U9/U10 level play 6v6, so each team has 6 players (including the goal keeper) on the field at a time. The 6v6 field is about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an 11v11 field, and typically has the markings of a full size field. For the first time, at U9/U10 age groups, formations begin to come into play. A formation is how players are positioned on the field. Some common formations used by 6v6 teams include the 3-2, the 1-3-1, and the 2-2-1. These numbers add up to five, not six, as the keeper is not typically included in the name of a formation. Formations are read from back line to forward line, so a 3-2 formation consists of a goal keeper and three backs (a left back, center back, and right back) and two forwards (left forward and right forward). More information on 6v6 formations can be found in the Formations Guide on the ASC Website.

Rules of the Game for the U9/U10 Age Group

- **Ball Size:** Size 4
- **Length of Game:** two 30 minute halves
- **Penalty Kicks:**
 - **In-Town League:** no penalty kicks. For a foul that would usually result in a penalty kick, the ref will instead award the team that was fouled a direct kick at the top of the penalty box.
 - **BAYS League:** penalty kicks will be taken from a point eight yards directly in front of the midpoint of the goal. All other players must stand beyond the midfield line.
- **Direct and Indirect Kicks:** The kicking team may request that the opponents stand at least 10 yards away from the ball.
- **Goal Kicks:** The team not in possession of the ball shall withdraw (move back) to its defensive half of the field and may not enter its offensive half of the field until the ball is kicked and moved. Should the team in possession put the ball in play before the opposing players have taken position in their defensive half, play will continue. The ball is in play when it leaves the penalty area.
- **Throw-In's:**
 - **In-Town League:** At referee's discretion, player may be given a second chance.
 - **BAYS League:** Incorrect throw-ins go to the other team.
- **Substitutions:**
 - **In-Town League:** Players enter on midfield line. Both teams can sub on a goal kick, throw-in, injury, or after a goal.
 - **BAYS League:** Players enter on the midfield line. Teams can sub after a goal, on goal kicks, their own throw-ins, injuries, or on opposing team's throw-in only if the opponent is also subbing.

- **Offside:** none/does not apply.
- **Slide Tackles:**
 - **In-Town League:** Not allowed. Players must stay on their feet.
 - **BAYS League:** Allowed.

Recommended licenses for the age group

Ideally, all head and assistant coaches should have obtained their F license prior to coaching the U9/U10 age group and are working to obtain their E license by the end of the U10 age group.

Conclusion

U9/U10 is an exciting age group – full of rapid skill development and players that are eager to learn. The coach’s main objective must remain to instill a love of the game in these young athletes. With that passion, the coach will see players skill development progress quickly over these two years. This is the age where players begin to truly understand what it means to be part of a team, and where the coach has the ability to impact players in such a way that they develop characteristics that will allow them to be successful on the field and off the field. The lessons and values players learn during the U9/U10 age group are the lessons and values they will carry forth. For these reasons, it is essential that the coach understand the significance of his or her influence, and make sure to obtain the education and knowledge not only of the game but of children as well.

Coaches are encouraged to jump in and play with the players at the U9/U10 age group. Avoid parking yourself in net, as that can become frustrating for players. Instead take an active role in the game, demonstrating the skills – such as communication – that you hope to see in your players. At this age players have not yet developed cynicism or self-consciousness that in later years may impact their confidence on the field. Coaches should make sure to make the most of their eagerness and willingness to try new skills – and should put creativity and decision making – even if it results in giving up goals – ahead of all else. Empowering these young players to make decisions and try new thing will inspire confidence that will allow them to continue to develop throughout their soccer careers.

While the skills above are essential and must be incorporated in practices throughout the U9/U10 years, there are two additional things that should occur at every practice and game from every player. These two things are the essence of soccer, childhood, and life. Thus the coach should go to great lengths to ensure that they happen many times each practice and that each and every player experiences them. These two things are smiles and laughter. If the coach keeps it fun, focused, and developmentally appropriate as discussed in this guide, and smiles and laughter will be part of every training session, and the natural byproduct of those smiles and laughter will be the desire and motivation to develop the skills laid out in this guide.

U9/U10 MILESTONES CHECKLIST

TECHNICAL SKILLS	PHYSICAL FITNESS & ABILITY SKILLS
Passing	Agility <input type="checkbox"/>
Ground – Instep Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Body Resistance Exercises <input type="checkbox"/>
Ground – Crossing <input type="checkbox"/>	Endurance <input type="checkbox"/>
General – Passing with Inside of Foot <input type="checkbox"/>	Range of Motion Flexibility <input type="checkbox"/>
General – Passing with Outside of Foot <input type="checkbox"/>	Rhythm Exercises <input type="checkbox"/>
Dribbling	Injury Prevention & Healthy Routine
Fakes <input type="checkbox"/>	Reinforce – Regular Warm Up <input type="checkbox"/>
Turns <input type="checkbox"/>	Cool Down <input type="checkbox"/>
Shooting	Nutrition <input type="checkbox"/>
Ground – Instep Drive <input type="checkbox"/>	Hydration <input type="checkbox"/>
Ground – Chip <input type="checkbox"/>	
Receiving	PSYCHOLOGICAL/MENTAL STRENGTH SKILLS
Ground – Cushion – Outside of Foot <input type="checkbox"/>	Communication <input type="checkbox"/>
Ground – Cushion – Instep <input type="checkbox"/>	Groups of 3, 4, or 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Ground – Wedge – Instep <input type="checkbox"/>	How to Win/Lose Gracefully <input type="checkbox"/>
Bounce – Cushion – Inside of Foot <input type="checkbox"/>	Increased Responsibility <input type="checkbox"/>
Bounce – Cushion – Instep <input type="checkbox"/>	Increased Sensitivity <input type="checkbox"/>
Bounce – Cushion – Outside of Foot <input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional Regulation <input type="checkbox"/>
Bounce – Wedge – Sole of Foot <input type="checkbox"/>	Focus for ½ Game <input type="checkbox"/>
Bounce – Wedge – Inside of Foot <input type="checkbox"/>	Self-Motivation <input type="checkbox"/>
Bounce – Wedge – Outside of Foot <input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

U9/U10 MILESTONES CHECKLIST CONT.

TACTICAL SKILLS	
Principles of Attack - Reinforce	Principles of Defense - Reinforce
Penetration <input type="checkbox"/>	Pressure <input type="checkbox"/>
Support <input type="checkbox"/>	Support (Cover) <input type="checkbox"/>
Width <input type="checkbox"/>	
Attacking	Defending
Creating Width in the Attack <input type="checkbox"/>	1 st & 2 nd Defender Roles <input type="checkbox"/>
Channel Concepts (Flank & Central) <input type="checkbox"/>	1v1 Defending <input type="checkbox"/>
Weak Side <input type="checkbox"/>	Defending in Pairs <input type="checkbox"/>
Changing the Point of Attack <input type="checkbox"/>	Distance, Angle, & Support by 2 nd Defender <input type="checkbox"/>
Thirds <input type="checkbox"/>	Goal Side & Ball Side Positioning <input type="checkbox"/>
Triangle Shape <input type="checkbox"/>	
Combinations <input type="checkbox"/>	
1 st & 2 nd Attacker Roles <input type="checkbox"/>	
2v1 Attacking <input type="checkbox"/>	
Attacking Runs	Defending Runs
Checking Runs <input type="checkbox"/>	Tracking Runs <input type="checkbox"/>
Overlapping Runs <input type="checkbox"/>	Marking Runs <input type="checkbox"/>
Withdrawing Runs <input type="checkbox"/>	Covering Runs <input type="checkbox"/>