

# ***Lake View Soccer***



## ***Instructional & Squirt Divisions Coaches Manual***

## ***EFFECTIVE COACHING BEHAVIOR***

You have just volunteered to become a soccer coach for a youth program in your community. Congratulations! You have just agreed to pursue one of the most rewarding and difficult challenges in which you have ever engaged. To enjoy the best possible experience, you need to adopt a number of characteristics and behaviors. Few of us possess all the abilities required to properly coach young children.

The youth sport experience is all about children. Being an effective soccer coach requires certain traits. You must be a responsible adult at all times. You must possess a strong desire to work with children and to understand the complexities that exist within children of different ages, levels of development and maturity. How can you provide the best environment for children to grow, develop, and have fun?

There are dozens of positive characteristics that one must possess to become an effective youth soccer coach. Some are listed below:

### ***CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE YOUTH COACHES:***

- High Moral and Ethical Standards.
  - Be an appropriate role model.
- Honesty.
  - Be fair, no one likes it if you cheat.
- Respect of Players, Parents, and Community.
  - Develop strategies to develop positive relationships with all involved.
- Understanding Readiness Factors for Participation.
  - Maturation — when to begin, how the game is structured.
  - Learning — what are children able to comprehend and how do they learn.
  - Motivation — internal desire to play and have fun.
- Communication.
  - Appropriate verbal and nonverbal responses (body language & gestures).
  - Appropriate language (words, tone, volume, rhythm, articulation).
- Development of an Appropriate Temperament for Coaching Children.
  - Be sensitive to each child.
  - Exhibit a calm personality.
  - Show patience.
  - Observe and Guide; Don't Direct.
  - Use your normal voice, not a whistle.
- Ability to Motivate Positively.
  - Develop high levels of self-confidence.
  - Positive coaching.
  - Don't yell.
- Possess Leadership Qualities.
  - Be prepared.
  - Be organized.
  - Demonstrate discipline — identify appropriate and inappropriate behavior and enforce team rules.
  - Learn to be critical of behavior, not a player's personality.

## ***CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE YOUTH COACHES (CONTINUED):***

- Be Dedicated to Child Development and the Sport of Soccer.
  - Understand what is appropriate for different ages and levels of play.
  - Let every child play (and play a lot).
- Be Enthusiastic.
  - Your enthusiasm is contagious.
  - Celebrate!
- Have a Good Sense of Humor.
  - Keep things light.
  - Have fun.
  - Smile and laugh.
- Must Have Current Knowledge of Coaching Youth Soccer.
  - Learn about children and how they learn.
  - Learn the rules.
  - Learn appropriate practices, activities, and content.
  - Learn appropriate tactics and strategy.
  - Learn how to have fun.

## ***UNDERSTANDING THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF A YOUTH SOCCER COACH:***

- The coach is likely to be the first person of influence in the child's sport involvement.
- Have total respect for the players, parents, officials, the game and yourself.
- Never make physical gestures or verbal statements that are meant to embarrass or humiliate a player, opponent, parent, or official.
- Be sure everyone plays an appropriate amount of time regardless of the score.
- Set a language example and enforce it. No swearing or use of profanity ever!
- Be a disciplinarian! Enforce your philosophy.
- Demonstrate sportsmanlike behavior. Shake hands with the opposing coach and be sure to praise the opposition. Encourage your players to do the same.

## ***PRINCIPLES OF COACHING***

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. **Developmentally Appropriate.** This challenges the coach to examine the appropriateness of the activity. The requirements or demands of the activity should fall within the range of a players' abilities. Examples include: Attempting to teach a wall-pass to U8's when they cannot think in advance of the ball or asking a U6 player to stay in a specific position when their spatial awareness is limited and possess a strong desire to chase the ball.
2. **Clear, Concise and Correct Information.** How instructions are given is crucial when dealing with young children. Too much information overwhelms them and too little information doesn't give them enough to get started. Provide enough information to get them started and then add new challenges.
3. **Simple to Complex.** Are the activities presented in a way that allows for ongoing modifications and new challenges to meet the player's interests and abilities?

## ***PRINCIPLES OF COACHING (CONTINUED)***

4. Safe and Appropriate Training Area. The area should be free of hazardous materials (e.g., glass, stones, branches, holes, etc.) and be safe from traffic or other environmental dangers. The training environment should be psychologically safe. Does the child feel emotionally secure? Is the fear of failure reduced? Can the child take creative risks without the fear of admonishment from the coach?
5. Decision Making. Are there opportunities for the players to make decisions? Decisions may be spatial (where to run or pass), temporal (when do I pass or run), or kinesthetic (how do I handle the ball)? These need to be present in all activities for learning to occur. Remember that learning is not efficient and that effective learning may be the result of inefficient trials.
6. Implications for the Game. The activities presented in a training session must in some way reflect the demands a player faces in the game. The younger the player the less clear this may seem, while the older the player (i.e. 10 or older), the more clear it will become. However, the implications for the game are even the foundational movement and thinking skills that will enable the player to later solve more complex problems.

## ***ELIMINATING LINES, LAPS & LECTURES***

This was to be included as a principle of coaching, but we decided that its importance warranted its placement here: Eliminating lines, laps and lectures means:

- a) having players stand in lines waiting for their turn generally indicates an inappropriate activity. If players are standing and not moving the activity will not keep their interest;
- b) running laps, especially without a ball, is a waste of time. All practice activities should take place on the field, preferably with a ball;
- c) lectures should be left for the classroom. Children come to practice to be active and participate, not to be talked to for extended periods of time.

## ***PUNISHMENT***

The use of physical activity such as laps, push-ups, sit-ups etc., as punishment for misbehavior is an inappropriate method of discipline. Players will come to believe that physical training is actually a form of punishment. Players need to understand the importance of fitness and making them run when there is a behavior problem is counter to what you want to develop. When the consequences warrant, short-term exclusion from the activity will often get a positive result.

## ***GAME/ACTIVITY CHECKLIST:***

- Are the activities fun? Are they enjoyable to perform and will it keep their interest?
- Are the activities organized? Are the objectives clear? It doesn't need to be highly structured or without any rules, but the purpose and guidelines of the activity need to be understood.
- Are the players involved in the activities? Is there maximum participation of all players, or are some more active than others?
- Is creativity and decision making being used? Are their decisions to move or employ a particular skill ever changing, or are they just repeating the same movement without thinking?
- Is the space appropriate for the age group and number of players? If they can effectively move without colliding into each other as well as not becoming too exhausted from trying to

## ***GAME/ACTIVITY CHECKLIST (CONTINUED):***

cover too much ground, it is probably a sufficient area. Is the space allowing for the objectives of the activity to be realized?

- Is the coach's feedback appropriate? For younger players, feedback should be positive and frequent. Players up to around age nine view effort and ability as synonymous. If they try hard, they believe they are really good. Coaches should try to combine feedback with the player's first name. It leads to a more personalized approach and players tend to focus on the feedback better.
- What are the implications for the game? Are the objectives of the activity related to the demands they will face in a game? The younger the child, the broader and less clear the activity objectives may appear in relation to the game.

## ***YOUTH COACHING SUMMARY***

A coach's influence on a young child is extremely important. The effect that a coach has could last for an extended period of time beyond the season. Therefore, your personality, action and words could have a dramatic positive, or negative, effect on each and every child. The value of understanding children, being fair and enthusiastic, as well as being a positive role model, cannot be underestimated.

## ***WHAT ABOUT GOALKEEPING?***

Many of the law changes in soccer have been centered on goalkeeping; how quickly the ball is released, what is allowed in the pass back, etc. All of these new laws have forced us to reconsider the overall dynamics of goalkeeping. More than ever before, modern goalkeepers cannot detach themselves from the game. They have become vital elements of the attack as well as their more traditional role as the last defensive stand. They must be accurate passers of the ball during distribution, reliable receivers of the ball under pressure and even show deftness at heading when clearing errant back passes.

This means that the youth goalkeeper must be competent in field skills. Most goalkeeping skills are specific to the position (catching low, medium and high balls, diving, throwing). Older players are more likely to embrace goalkeeping as a more or less permanent role. How well these players incorporate the physical and mental skills of both field player and goalkeeper will determine the true effectiveness of their jobs as the first line of attack and the last line of defense.

## ***GOALKEEPING KEY CONSIDERATIONS:***

- Players at the U-10 level and older should be encouraged, not forced, to be exposed to goalkeeping roles in practice. Many players develop goalkeeping skills at older ages. Exposing many players at U-10 and U-12 to the position could help identify a hidden talent. Further, exposure to the rigors of goalkeeping may help field players understand the difficulty of the position.
- Goalkeeping should become an active part of every practice. Unfortunately, many coaches incorrectly set up practices where goalkeepers work mostly by themselves and call on them only for shooting exercises. Goalkeepers should be used early in practice in technical development with the ball at their feet, and either as targets or in their primary role in front

## **GOALKEEPING KEY CONSIDERATIONS (CONTINUED):**

of the net to solidify their importance. They should not only play as shot blockers and distributors of the ball, but as active communication links with the rest of the team.

- The role of the goalkeeper needs to move beyond that of a shot blocker during shooting practice. Coaches should permit goalkeepers to distribute the ball, which increases their decision-making and communication abilities. The goalkeeper's offensive role should develop in concert with their defensive role.
- **Be Active.** Concentration by the goalkeeper is vitally important to their effectiveness. Goalkeepers who stay on their line or who are not attached to the rest of the team will soon be reacting to a desperate situation instead of a relatively safe one. Encouraging goalkeepers to be involved and ready goes a long way in reducing dangerous situations.
- Goalkeeping is a tough job. Much is expected of goalkeepers, but they receive very little praise. In many ways, goalkeepers are subject to open and unforgiving exposure. Mistakes are clearly showcased and become very personalized, and psychologically deflating. Mistakes will be made. Encouragement and understanding mixed with sound coaching advice will go a long way in creating a stimulating playing environment.
- When to begin as a goalkeeper is a question asked by many coaches. The authors believe that initiating goalkeeping in games prior to age nine is inappropriate. Children should be exposed to body movements that simulate what goalkeepers do, but to put them under the pressure of being a goalkeeper before they have developed some basic psychomotor and cognitive skills is inappropriate.

## **BASIC SOCCER RULES**

- **No Hands, please** - First, the rule for a hand ball includes using any part of the body from the tips of the fingers to the shoulder. Second, the proper way to look at this soccer rule is that a player cannot "handle" the ball. A ball that is kicked and hits a player's hand or arm is not a hand ball. This means that the referee must judge whether or not a hand ball is accidental contact or the player handled the ball on purpose to gain an advantage. There is also a situation in which the goalie cannot use his/her hands. This is sometimes called the back-pass rule. Goalkeepers cannot pick up a pass that came directly from one of their teammates. In this case, the goalkeeper must use his feet. If the goalie does pick-up the ball it will result in an indirect kick from where he/she touched the ball.
- **Throw-ins** - A throw-in is taken when the ball crosses a sideline and leaves the field. The two basic soccer rules for a proper throw-in are to have both feet on the ground and to throw the ball with both hands over the head.
- **Corner Kicks & Goal Kicks** - A corner kick or goal kick is taken when the ball leaves the field across the goal line – the end of the field. If the offensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a goal kick. If the defensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a corner kick. The goal kick is taken from anywhere inside the "goal area box". It can be taken by any player. The ball must leave the "Penalty Area" before anyone can touch the ball. If the ball does not leave the Penalty Area then the kick must retake. The corner kick is taken from the corner nearest to where the ball left the field.
- **Fouls** - The common rule of thumb on fouls is "If it looks like a foul, it probably is." A player cannot kick, trip, jump at, charge, strike, push, hold, or spit at an opponent. Bumping, leaning

## **BASIC SOCCER RULES (CONTINUED)**

or going shoulder-to-shoulder while competing for a ball is *not a foul* until the hands or elbows come up.

- **Direct and Indirect Free Kicks** - The simple difference between the two is this: On a **direct kick** you can score by kicking the ball directly into the goal. On an **indirect kick** you cannot score. An indirect kick must be touched by another player before it can go into the goal – that is the kicker and a second person. *You can tell whether the kick is direct or indirect by looking at the referee. For an indirect kick, the referee will hold one arm straight up in the air until the second person touches the ball. No arm up or pointing towards the goal, it's a direct kick.* In general, a direct kick comes from a contact foul or hand ball. Everything else is indirect.
- **Penalty Kick** - A penalty kick results from a contact foul or hand ball by the defending team within the penalty area – the large box on either end of the field. So it's a type of direct kick also. The ball is placed on the penalty spot, in front of the center of the goal. All players must remain outside the penalty area and the penalty arc until the ball is kicked. The goalkeeper must have both feet on the goal line until the ball is kicked. If after the ball is kicked, it rebounds off of the goal or the keeper and stays on the field, the ball is "live" and anyone can play it.
- **Two-touch Rule** - A player cannot touch the ball twice in a row when putting the ball in play. You will see this called many times in youth soccer. It applies everywhere. You will see it frequently on kick-offs or direct and indirect kicks. If a player barely hits the ball and decides to take another kick at it, that is a two-touch. This also applies to throw-ins. A player cannot throw the ball in and then kick it.
- **Offside** - You cannot be offside on a corner kick, goal kick, or throw-in. Also, it is not an offense for a player to be in an offside position. The player must be involved in active play as determined by the referee to be called offside. **A player is in an offside position if: he is nearer to his opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent.**

## **U6 PLAYER (Instructional & Squirt Divisions) CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Constantly in motion
- Short attention span (easily distracted)
- Individually oriented (egocentric)
- About 3 feet, 3 inches tall
- Weigh between 30-50 pounds
- Easily bruised psychologically
- Primitive eye-foot coordination
- Little concern for team activities
- Balance on the dominant foot
- No sense of pace; they will often run until they drop

## **TRAINING THE U-6 PLAYER (Instructional & Squirt Divisions):**

- Give brief directions; repeat when necessary.
- Many activities of short duration.
- Lots of water breaks.
- Limit training sessions to 45 minutes

## ***TRAINING THE U-6 PLAYER (Instructional & Squirt Divisions) (CONTINUED):***

- Emphasize familiarity and confidence with the ball (every child must have access to a ball throughout every training session)

### ***GAME RULES (Instructional & Squirt Divisions)***

#### **Instructional Division:**

- Field Size - teams will play their games on one of the mini sized fields at the Burke Road Athletic Complex. The general dimensions for the fields are approximately 25 yards X 20 yards each.
- Ball Size - Size 3
- Game Duration:
  - The first part of the session will be dedicated to teaching the game of soccer and skill work involved in playing the game
  - Teams will then play mini sessions of ten to fifteen minutes. Teams are permitted to play as many of these sessions as they desire and can fit into the seventy-minute session of the Lake View Athletics game period.
  - Teams are free to decide on the break time between mini sessions. Both teams must agree before the instructional period begins.
  - Game time may be shorted to allow for the match to be played in sunlight when necessary.
- Players on field - 5 field players plus goalie
- Subbing - there will be substitutions for injured players and after each mini session (10-15 minutes in length each).
  - Each coach should attempt to ensure equal game time for all players
  - No player should sit two mini sessions in a row unless they are injured or sick
  - No player should play every mini session unless the team is short players
  - Coaches should encourage player rotation and position experimentation
- Goalies - should not play more than 2 quarters, totaling no more than 24 minutes of play in net. Coaches must use a minimum of two (2) different goalkeepers in each game. Goalies can be subbed at any time.
- Heading - in the Instructional and Squirt Divisions, coaches have full responsible for their safety of their players and enforcing this rule during practice and mini-game sessions.

#### **Squirt Division:**

- Field Size - teams will play their games on one of the mini sized fields at the Burke Road Athletic Complex. The general dimensions for the fields are approximately 25 yards X 20 yards each.
- Ball Size - Size 3
- Game Duration:
  - The first part of the session will be dedicated to teaching the game of soccer and skill work involved in playing the game
  - Teams will then play mini sessions of ten to fifteen minutes. Teams are permitted to play as many of these sessions as they desire and can fit into the seventy-minute session of the Lake View Athletics game period.
  -



## ***GAME RULES (Instructional & Squirt Divisions) (CONTINUED)***

- Teams are free to decide on the break time between mini sessions. Both teams must agree before the instructional period begins.
- Game time may be shorted to allow for the match to be played in sunlight when necessary.
- Players on field - 5 field players plus goalie
- Subbing - there will be substitutions for injured players and after each mini session (10-15 minutes in length each).
- Each coach should attempt to ensure equal game time for all players
- No player should sit two mini sessions in a row unless they are injured or sick
- No player should play every mini session unless the team is short players
- Coaches should encourage player rotation and position experimentation
- Goalies - should not play more than 2 quarters, totaling no more than 24 minutes of play in net. Coaches must use a minimum of two (2) different goalkeepers in each game. Goalies can be subbed at any time.
- Heading - in the Instructional and Squirt Divisions, coaches have full responsible for their safety of their players and enforcing this rule during practice and mini-game sessions.

## ***SAMPLE GAMES/ACTIVITIES (Instructional & Squirt Divisions)***

It is important to vary the activities from practice to practice. New and different activities can be added over the course of the season. Each activity can also be modified to make it more or less challenging (this depends on the developmental levels and abilities of the children in the group). Remember, every child must have a ball. The following series of activities can be utilized during every training session although it is wise to develop new activities and games and introduce them over the course of the season.

### ***Game 1: Ball Retrieve (Body Awareness/Target Game)***

The coach stands in the middle of the training site and collects all of the balls. The coach then explains that he will throw the balls in different directions and that each player must bring their ball back to the coach as quickly as they can. The coach puts various conditions on how they retrieve the ball (an example: with one hand; one hand with the ball touching the forehead; both hands and the ball touching their belly button, etc.). Once the children show comfort with the exercise, they are asked to maneuver the ball with their feet. Once a comfort level is reached again, the coach then creates a different challenge for the players to solve.

### ***Game 2: Body Part Dribble (Body Awareness)***

Each player has a ball in an area such as a 20 x 20 yard circle or square. Players dribble their ball in the space and avoid touching other players. While they dribble, the coach or leader calls out a body part, such as "forehead," "elbow," "chin," "knee," etc. Simon Says is a good variation of this activity. After the player has touched the body part to the ball, the player should then immediately continue to dribble. This activity promotes listening skills and reinforces the knowledge of body parts. Very young players do not understand left or right direction. If you say "left elbow", don't expect compliance from the player.

### ***Game 3: Glob (Target Game)***

Players like this so much they would likely perform this activity for the entire training period if permitted. Begin without a ball. Use cones to outline the sidelines and the finish line (a 20 x 20 yard space should be adequate). Stand in the middle of the area and talk and act like a Glob, challenging the players to TRY to run (without the ball) across the space without being caught (tagged) by the nasty Glob. Ham it up a bit to have more fun. Then, have them try to get across Glob Country by dribbling their ball while the coach tries to touch their ball out of bounds. Their re-entry back into the game can be done in many ways, (i.e. three foot taps on the ball, throw the ball in the air clap twice and catch it, etc). This is not an elimination game.

### ***Game 4: Everybody's It (Maze Game)***

This activity borders on the edge of controlled mayhem. In an appropriately sized space (approximately 20 x 20 yards), develop boundaries. Each player runs around, staying inside the boundaries, trying to tag as many other players while at the same time trying to not get tagged themselves. Give a signal of when to begin and let them play for 30-45 seconds. It's a game of total vision, requiring the players to have full awareness of what's around them. They need to learn how to move into spaces to attack (tag), and out of space to retreat (avoid being tagged).

### ***Game 5: Gates (Maze Game)***

The coach places cones throughout the training area (20 x 20 yards) in pairs about three feet apart. Upon command, players dribble a ball through as many "cone gates" in the time specified by the coach. Sixty seconds work well. Parents should help the player's count how many times they pass through the gates as the ability to dribble through gates and count is difficult at this age. Each player gets a chance to repeat the exercise to try and beat their own score. It is appropriate for younger players to compete against themselves, not other players.

In all the games, start first without a ball. After the players understand the objective and the rules of the game, introduce the ball.