

Playing at U7 and U8

Hoover Soccer Club

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HSC Playing at U7 / U8

- **HSC Playing Conditions**
- **Training Guidelines**

Overview HSC Playing Conditions

- **Overview**
- **Limited Referee Role**
- **Coach's**
- **Kick Off's**
- **Role of Center Circle**
- **No Goalkeeper/Permanent Defender**
- **Length of Game and Periods**
- **Substitution's and All around Development**

Restarts and Positioning of Coaches on Game day

| | Tykes | U5 | U6 | U8 |
|------------------|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---|
| Kick Off | Dribble | Pass | Pass | Pass |
| Free Kick | Dribble | Dribble | Pass | Pass |
| Goal Kick | Dribble | Dribble | Pass | Pass |
| Corner | Dribble | Dribble | Pass | Pass |
| Throw In | Dribble or Parent | Dribble | Pass | Throw |
| Ref | None | Coaches | Coaches | Coach – 1 st 3 wks of season |
| Coach | Whole Field | Whole Field | Only own Half | Sideline |

Q & A - U7 & U8 Activity before Game

- **Why is there an practice activity before a game?**
- 18 months ago – a study was taken off several games at each group. The findings showed that even in a small sided environment most players do not get many opportunities to enhance there technical ability or begin to make basic tactical choices.
- The following data was based on game length and then halved for average playing time. A touch was considered a definite contact and not when surrounded by other players and trying to get the ball by a kicking motion

U5 Game Length **32** mins Avg Playing Time **16** mins
Number of Touches **18** Average Per Minute **1.125**

U6 Game Length **32** mins Avg Playing Time **16** mins
Number of Touches **23** Average Per Minute **1.4375**

U8 Game Length **40** mins Avg Playing Time **20** mins
Number of Touches **36** Average Per Minute **1.8**

- The following are expected touches in 1 activity
U5 8 mins **110-130** touches **13-16** per minute
U6 8 mins **130-150** touches **16-18** per minute
U8 8 mins **180-220** touches **18-22** per minute

Q & A - U7 & U8 Activity before Game

- **Why is there an practice activity before a game?**
- The activity will give players' an opportunity's for individual development as well as better preparing them for the challenge of competition [emotionally, mentally and physically] provided by other players.
- For example at U5 and even U6 – the game is 3 vs. 3 but players will take the ball off their own teammates, thus, it can resemble 1 vs. 5. At U7/8 although the game is 4 vs. 4, quite often at least 1 player on a team will still take the ball off a teammate, therefore, making the game 3 vs. 5.
- For some players the highlight of the gameday besides the tunnel and snack maybe the activity before the game. They may thrive and laugh and be happy most when they play Cars, Clean Up Your Room, Nemo, Sharks and Minnows in Pairs or Treasure Chest. Some may not feel engaged by a game where there is only 1 ball between 6 or even 8.
- This may vary each week for each child but the purpose of the activity is to help the child enhance their ball mastery, make decisions, improve their coordination/movement and have fun. As a result of the activity each game is reduced by 2 mins each quarter so the player is not fatigued at the end of the game. This still entails games of 24 and 32 mins and with the activity the recommended 32 and 40 mins of participation by USYSA.

Q & A - U7 & U8 Game

- **Why are coaches acting as referees removed at some point in the season?**
- At the U7/U8 level **NO coach is allowed on the field – except for the first 2/3 weeks.** The rationale is as the child begins to expand their decision making abilities, self confidence and comfort level with the ball, their need for hands on teaching will decrease.
- Another reason is to **reduce the potential disagreements between coaches.** Even at the younger ages differences of opinions occur so the aim is to remove the Coach from an opportunity of disagreement with another coach, as well as where the players' copy any unsporting behavior.
- Players' begin to take ownership of games by participating in player development / street soccer Monday night training sessions.

Q & A - U7 & U8 Game

- **The use of Guided Discovery by the coaches / who act as referees?**
- The coaches / referees will not tell the teams whose ball it is moreover they will ask:
 - Who kicked the ball out?
 - Whose ball is it then?
 - Is it a goal kick or corner?
- This questioning **allows the players' to learn the rules in games not by drill command**, which only has a short term benefit but by **self discovery** which allows **long term benefits**. This philosophy harks back to how children used to referee their own games in days of "**street soccer**" and accelerates the children's ability to **understand ethical values** as they must come to agreement based on an **understanding of right and wrong**.

Q & A - U7 & U8 Game

- **Why have player's stand around the center circle when the other team kick's off or takes a goal kick? Why on some occasions will they be closer to their own goal?**
- This allows the team taking the goal kick to be able to move the ball down field and have some success. This also begins to paint the picture for players so they can begin to understand team shape or been compact – important factors for U8/U10.
- If one team has a great deal of success winning the ball and attacking...coaches have been asked to position their players closer to their own goal – near the box on their side of the field instead of the center circle and half way line. This will allow the other team more opportunity to enhance ball mastery whereby they have a little more time and less pressure to penetrate whereby they get closer to the opponents goal. In addition, this will enhance the ability of the defending team as they will be more challenged by having to attack a greater distance to score. In particular, they can not begin to use speed dribbling besides dribbling to beat an opponent.

U7 / U8 Kick Off Positioning

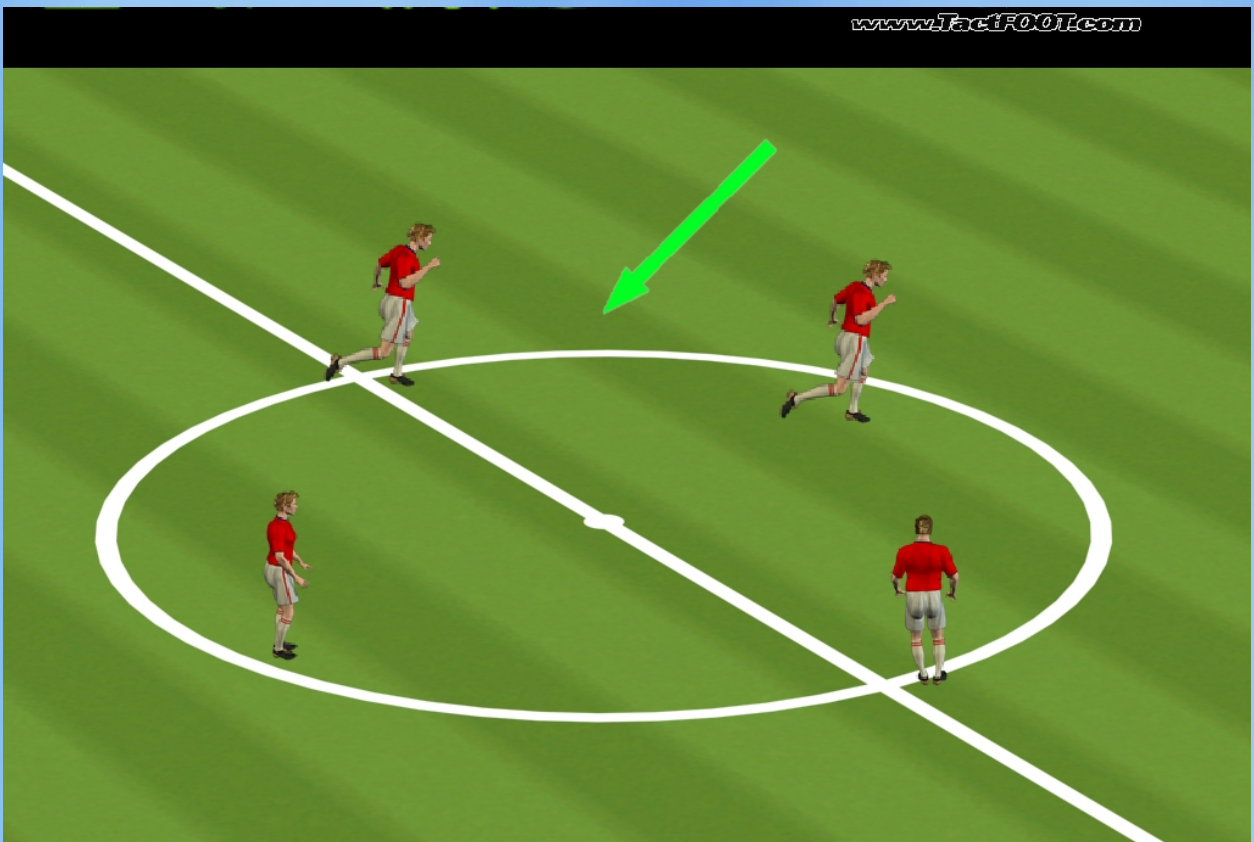
- U7 / U8 Player quickly passes the ball so all players are engaged by the ball.

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Goal Kick Defensive Positions

- Position to defend goal kicks - all players should be in center circle so opponents can begin to attack half way line. Players will drop closer to their own goal if they are having a great deal of success.



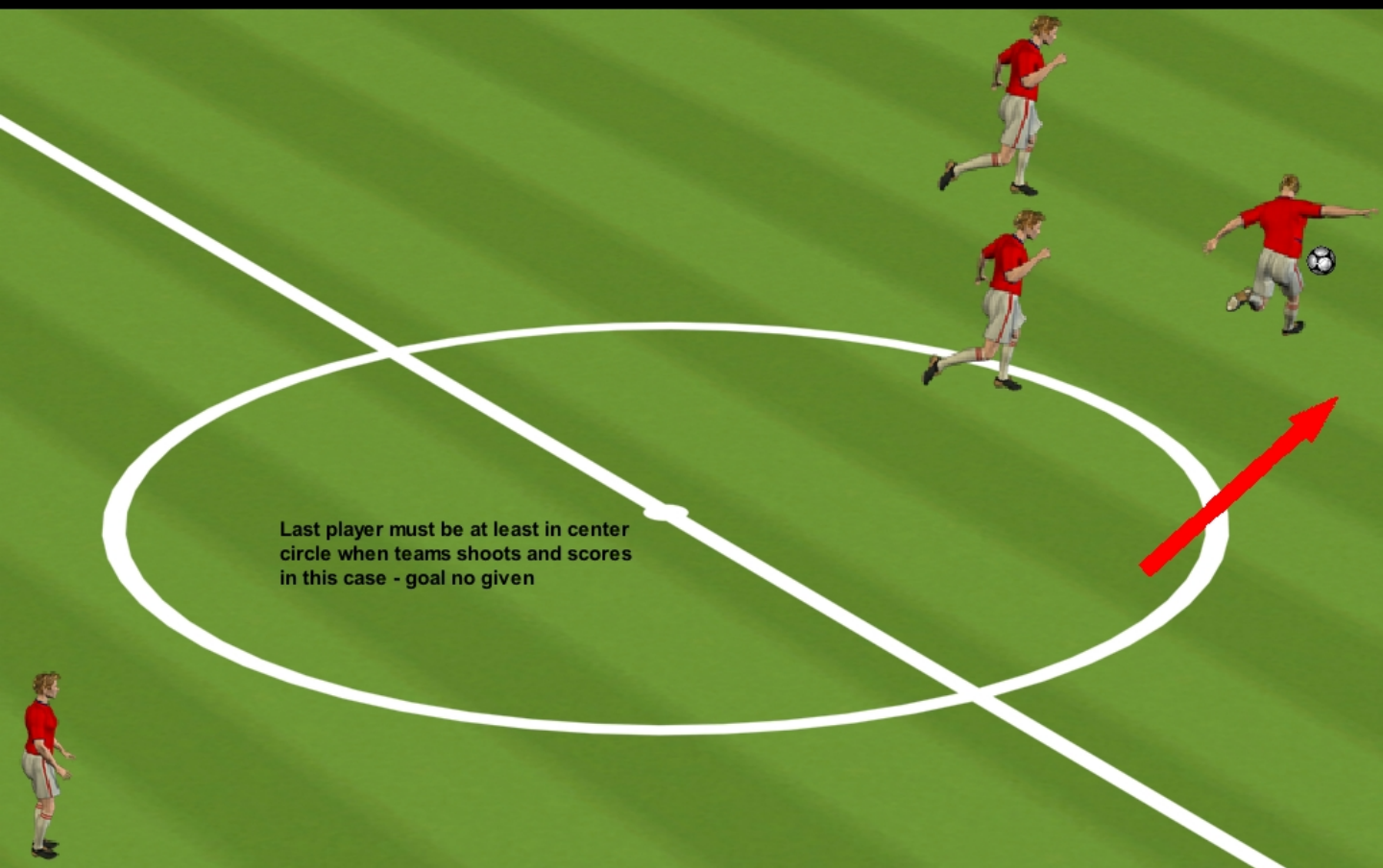
Q & A - U7 & U8 Game

- **Why promote players to not stand in front of their goal?**
- This restricts the player from experiencing all facets of the game. Too often this player enters the Academy level (U9-U10) believing that they are a defender and not a soccer player - in other words that all they can do is defend. In contrast the goal is to develop all around players.
- Besides hurting the individual - a team who attacks with only 3 players will find itself against 4 opponents and less likely to succeed. However, if the last defender played closer it allows the team to be compact and able to more easily win any clearance around the half way line. If the defender stayed near their own goal - a foot race would take place where opponents would rush towards the goal and the defender (taught by coach to stay in goal area) would concede ground and most likely shy away from a close range shot, thus conceding the goal the coach erroneously thought they could avoid.

Last Defender Position when team Attacking

- Last defender must be inside center circle when own team attacking other goal. This is to help stay compact, so last defender can win ball if cleared as well as to stop Goalkeeping / Last Defender

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Q & A - U7 & U8 Game

- **Why change the playing time from halves to quarters and shorten the time for games?**
- Besides USYS – other soccer or football (in other parts of the world) recommend playing games in quarters and not halves. The rationale is **children are not able to regulate themselves** (no sense of oncoming fatigue) and **go one speed until they drop**.
- Thus, a 8 minute quarter allows all players a chance to **naturally expand their energy** while also keeping them **engaged** as they have **short attention spans**.
- Although the players supposedly play less now, in actually they will be **more apt to developing ball mastery as the ball will be in play more**, based on the referee quickly getting them ball asking Guided Questions and restarting play ASAP.
- **Dribbling is the overriding focus** (the ability to dribble / ball control is foundation of all other skills in soccer) in minutes – they should be more apt to benefit.

Q & A - U7 & U8 Game

- **What is the club's suggested substitution pattern to help all around development?**
- Coaches have been asked to let all **players play all positions – Everyone should play at least 50%**

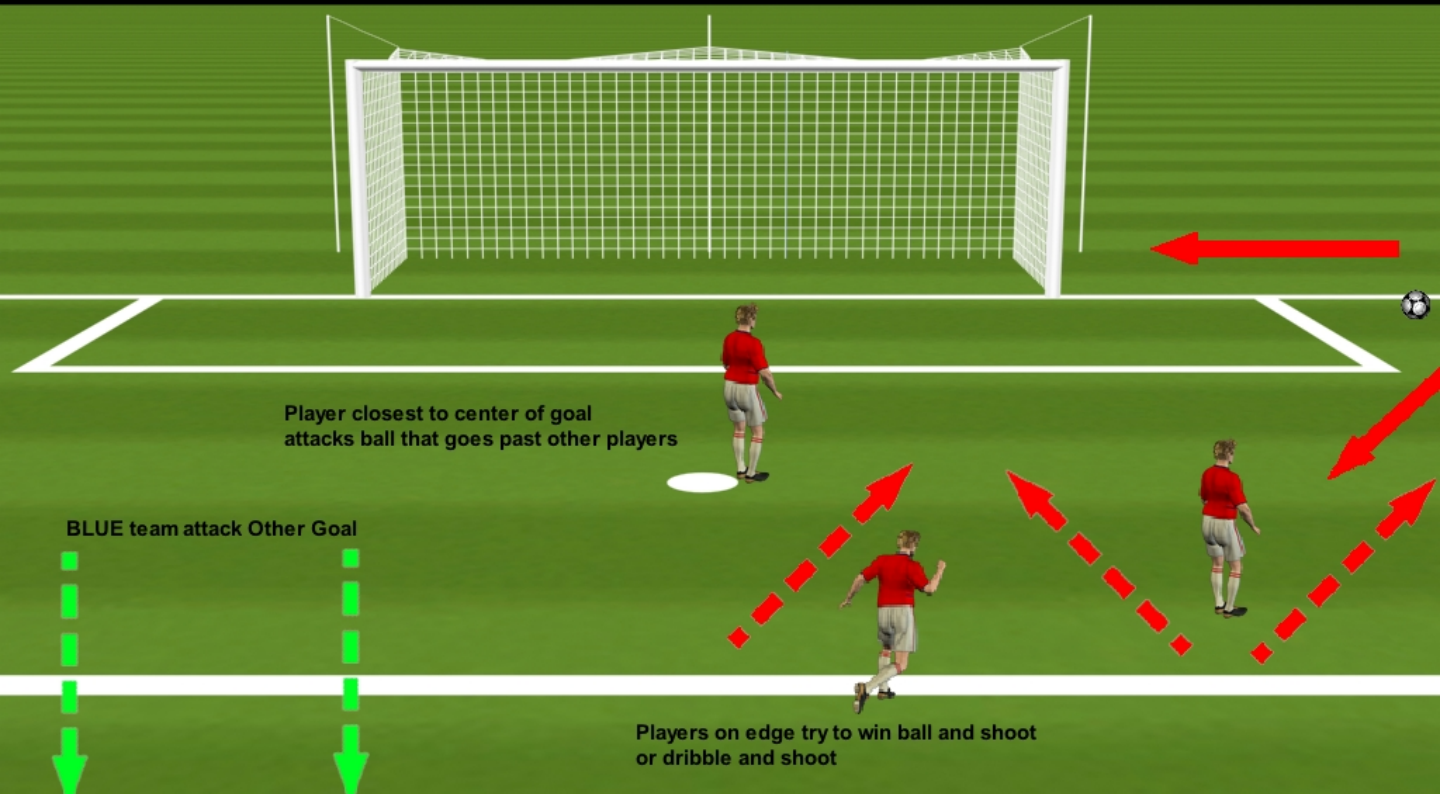
Example

- U7 and U8 – If 8 players on a team then all players play 4 mins and then are substituted.
- If someone plays on the right of a diamond in the first quarter they should then play at the base the next and then the left in the next quarter. They should finish the game at the top of the diamond
- The reason players are asked to play all positions is a **players' development can be limited if they are forced to play only one position.** Furthermore, they are **not exposed to the different attributes** required for playing wide, forward, backwards or in the middle.
- Too often players who enter an Academy environment (U9-U10) **believe they can only play 1 position.** When asked why, it is as a result of the intramural coach limiting their opportunities – to win a game and not the players' ongoing development.

Suggested Offensive Corner Positioning

- Position to attack corners - coaches should teach by placing cones in practice where players should stand

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Goal not to scale

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **Overview**
- **Tools and Lesson Plans**
- **Characteristics**
- **Goals and what technique to teach**

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **A) Overview**
- Six and seven-year-old players are a bit more compliant than their U-6 counterparts. They may be able to follow 2 or 3 step instructions and are starting to have a good understanding about what it means to play a "game."
- They are also starting to cooperate more with their teammates. In fact, they now will recognize that they even have teammates by the fact that they occasionally will pass the ball to a teammate on purpose. Often, they will repeat the phrase "I can't do that," but will quickly run to you to show you that they can, even when they only think that they can.
- Some of the players that are playing as a 7-year-old have had two years of soccer experience and thus have already touched the ball a few thousand times in their lives. **This, however, does not mean that these players are ready for the mental demands of tactical team soccer.**

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **A) Overview**
- They have some idea of the game, but the emphasis still needs to be placed on the individual's ability to control the ball with his or her body. They are still there to have fun, and because some of the players **may be brand new** to the sport, it is imperative that activities are geared towards individual success and participation.
- Your goal should be to foster a **positive attitude** toward themselves and others, a desire to continue in team sport, possibly soccer, a sense of physical confidence, using the game of soccer as a vehicle.
- **(Motivate, nothing negative all positive.)**
- **Your biggest challenge:** some limited attention span and still prone to physical fatigue. They do not know how to pace themselves. They will feel and express fatigue quicker when not stimulated or bored.
- **Don't train more than 50 mins.**
- **No lines, laps or lectures.**

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **Your tools:** Your own imagination, creativity and reaction to “things” happening during practice.
- Games at this level on some occasions still resemble the swarming of bees, although not to the extent of U6. They grasp the concept that the ball is meant to be kicked and a few will now **understand spacing**.
- Most just understand that the game is fun if you get to kick the ball, so why sit around and wait for it? **Don't get frustrated.**

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **HSC has developed practices for you that should help you keep them actively engaged**
- Plan periodic water breaks. The kids always love a full team scrimmage but this exercise is less useful for skill development than activities or especially small-sided games (3v3 or 4v4). They get more contact with the ball and can focus on a particular skill.
- **Save the scrimmage for the last**, especially as a reward for a smooth practice.
- Remember to be encouraging to all players and create skill development drills for the more skilled and the less skilled.
- **Use positive feedback only.**

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **B) Age characteristics – U8**
- Still self-focused and individualistic (me, mine, my) but many are willing to share
- Able to pay attention a bit longer than U-6 players but still not the same as the "competitive" stage
- Easily bruised psychologically; they will remember negative comments for a long time!
- Want everybody to like them.
- Praise often; give "hints" - don't criticize
- Inclined towards small group activities
- Starting to imitate older players or sports heroes; want the same "gear" as them
- Developing physical confidence (most are able to ride a two-wheeler)
- Understand simple rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated
- Lack sense of pace; they go flat out until they drop
- Most players will try to be tough and not cry immediately when something is hurt

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **B) Age characteristics – U8**
- There will be at least 200-300 falls during the season, but, now they will usually pick themselves back up.
- The puddle in front of the goal is still too tempting to resist.
- Keep a spare pump in your bag as the players usually do not realize that their ball is flat until they try to kick it, or the coach tells them that it is flat.
- Some of the girls are a lot tougher than the boys.
- They will still want to wear a pinnie, even when the color is identical to their shirt.
- It will be impossible to remember who is who's best friend as you try to make up teams.
- School conflicts will come up... please, let them go (they must face their teachers five days a week).
- They will wear their uniform to bed.

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **B) Age characteristics – U8**
- Better at recognizing when the ball is out of play, and remembering what goal they are going for... but, in the heat of battle, they will sometimes still forget; they still find it difficult to really be aware of more than one thing at a time
- **No matter how loud we shout, or how much you "practice" it, they will still have difficulty knowing when to pass the ball during a game**
- Twenty seconds after start of a game, every player will be within 5-10 yards of the ball
- Several players will slap at the ball with their hands, or pick it up. Several parents will yell at them not to do that.
- During a season, you will end up tying at least 50 shoe laces. They will do something that is absolutely hysterical. Make sure you laugh!

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **C) Coaching Rational**
- Be aware that children can differ in their level of development by as much as three years.
- Because of rapid growth spurts during this age, players will go through times when they seem to have lost control of their body. What they could easily do 2 weeks ago now seems unattainable. Be patient.
- At this age stretching is not needed
- Each session should be geared around touching the ball as many times as possible.
- **Avoid lines - Children do not behave well waiting in lines and it does not maximize effectiveness of sessions**
- As the children have limited senses of team play, **the coach should not become impatient due to lack of passing**; instead encourage dribbling.
- Especially in warmer weather, plan for at least four two-minutes water breaks

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **C) Coaching Rational**
- Do not allow anyone to get hurt (keep hands to yourself; do not kick ball in air until coach says it is ok; do not allow kids to carry equipment such as goals)
- Players at this age are already determining if an activity is fun or boring, but the parents still decide which activity their children will participate in. As a result, their coaches need to give them something to get excited about and want to come back to; and the activity needs to be organized and "appropriate" or the parents will pull their child from that activity.
- Challenge them to get better by practicing on their own. There is no rule which states that they can't learn by themselves, no matter how important we think we are.

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **C) Coaching Rational**
- Incidental things are important. They are forming the habits that will impact their future participation. Ask them to take care of their equipment (water bottle included), cooperate, listen, behave, and try hard. Realize, however, that they often forget and will need to be reminded often.
- Ask them to work with others to solve a particular challenge. Start them with just one partner and work from there.
- Further, at this age, learning to play soccer is secondary to most other things in their lives.
- **You are a role model, make sure you use appropriate language**

U7 / U8 Training Guidelines

- **D) Goals and what to teach Technique:**
- Dribbling with **instep** of foot
- Dribbling and change direction, use different parts of foot
- Less kicking less use of toe, sense of touch on ball
- Controlled pass / shot contact on moving ball
- Control ball with inside, instep and maybe outside of foot
- **Insight:**
- Know how to get to goal - dribble
- Keep ball close when others around
- Begin to consider sharing ball with teammates
- Understanding of boundaries and directions
- Sense of team shape - diamond
- Small-sided games 2v2, 3v3 and 4 v 4
- Basic understanding of rules
- Begin to sense spreading out, score goals/prevent other team from scoring goals, deliberately go to pressure opponent on ball
- Get involved