# Gulf Coast Soccer Club
# U-6 Training Plan

**CONGRATULATIONS!** You are the coach of your child's U-6 soccer team. RELAX and take a deep breath; you're going to do just fine. All of the trainers and coaches of the Gulf Coast Soccer Club's competitive teams welcome you to the Club and we stand ready to assist you any way we can. The effort that you offer to the Club in coaching this team will help us to continue to develop skilled and competitive soccer players. We want you to enjoy your experience as the one they call "Coach."

**REMEMBER:** We are teaching kids the simplest and most popular game in the world. To win the game, all you have to do is put a little ball into a gigantic goal. When the game is made too complicated, some players and coaches can become frustrated. This is especially true for younger players who are new to the game, so keep your training fun and simple.

**YOUR PRIMARY JOB** as a recreational coach is to keep this simple game FUN while teaching your players the basic skills of soccer. By keeping your instructions short and simple, you lessen the chances that your players will become bored and increase the chances that your players will learn the skills that you are teaching.

## UNDERSTANDING THE U-6 SOCCER PLAYER

1. They have a short attention span.
2. They love to laugh and have fun.
3. They each want the ball ALL the time ("my ball").
4. They want to SHOOT at the goal and score.
5. They will rarely pass the ball to a teammate (again, "my ball").
6. They will run until they drop but will recover quickly and be ready to go again.
7. They thrive on praise and celebration of success.
8. Boys and girls are equal in general ability and should be trained equally.
9. Eye-to-hand and foot-to-hand coordination is not well developed.
10. Their idea of defense is to gang attack the player with the ball, not the ball.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR THE COACH

1. Dress like your vision of a soccer coach.

2 Tell your players to ALWAYS bring a size 3 ball and water to training and to wear shin guards for training and games.

3. Have enough training aids to ensure successful training sessions.
4. Be prepared to demonstrate the skills you are teaching.
5. Make it fun while your players are learning these skills.
6. Praise your players and celebrate their successes.
7. Get your players' parents involved as helpers in training sessions.
8. Describe the basic concept of the game, the parts and boundaries of the field, how a game starts and the concept of "their" goal and "our" goal.
9. Realize and inform your players' parents that these are children learning a new game and that they should always be encouraged in a positive manner.

# TRAINING THE U-6 SOCCER PLAYER

## DRIBBLING TRAINING

Soccer is a game primarily played with the feet so you are going to make sure that each player is **DRIBBLING** (**moving**) the ball with each of their feet during the majority of the training session. Show them the main parts of their feet: toe, inside, outside and instep (laces) and how to control the movement, direction and speed of the ball with those foot parts.

**DRIBBLING GAMES**

**PING PONG**: Each player puts a ball between their feet so that their feet are not touching the ball. On a signal, they will pass the ball between their feet back and forth like a ping pong ball. This is good for developing touch & control and warming up.

**DRIBBLE SQUARE:** Set up a 5 yd X 5 yd square and position an equal number of players on all four sides with their soccer balls. On a signal, tell them to dribble their ball across the square while trying not to contact the other players or their balls. Do this three times for one minute each.

**SHARKS AND MINNOWS:** Set up a 5 yd X 5 yd square and have all of your players (minnows) except for one (shark) dribble around in the square. Tell them that a shark is about to enter their pool to kick their soccer balls outside of the pool and that they have to dribble their ball away from the shark. When a player's ball is cleared out of the square, that player becomes a shark also until all of the balls are cleared out of the pool.

**CHASE THE COACH**: Have the players chase you as you jog around the field while they are dribbling the ball – they love to try and catch you!

**SLALOM DRIBBLE**: Set up a widely spaced offset slalom course of single cones and have the players "follow the leader" (YOU) while dribbling their ball around each cone. Let each of them be leader once.

**CONE GATE DRIBBLING**: Starting at one end of the field, set up several two-cone gates in a weaving pattern towards a goal. They must dribble the ball through the gates and then shoot on goal.

## SHOOTING TRAINING

It's a fact - they ALL want to score a goal! Let's teach them the basics of good shooting technique early and it will stay with them for a long time. Each player must have a ball at their feet when you demonstrate the following basic technique for shooting at the goal First, here are some terms you need to know and teach.

**PLANT FOOT**: The PLANT foot is the foot that is placed NEXT to the ball right before they kick it with their shooting foot. The toe should point in the general direction where you want the ball to go and the knee of this leg is usually bent slightly forward for power.

**SHOOTING FOOT**: You must identify which foot is their dominant foot because that foot will most likely be their SHOOTING foot. Encourage them to strike the ball with the laces near the toe of the shoe with the toe pointing toward the ground. Correct their technique if they are "toe poking" the ball. It's a big bonus if a player can shoot left and right footed.

**FOLLOW-THROUGH**: Once the ball is contacted with the shooting foot, the shooting leg should swing through, up and across the front of their waist. This is called the FOLLOW-THROUGH. This action will result in the shooting foot becoming the first power step moving the player forward. Discourage them from using a "snap kick" follow through as it limits the power of the kick.

## SHOOTING GAMES

**SOCCER BOWLING:** Have them practice the plant, shoot and follow through technique while standing one step behind their ball, taking the step with their plant foot, swinging the shooting foot to contact the ball and following through with the shooting leg. Use single cones as targets for their kicks. Celebrate success and correct technique.

**MACHINE GUN SHOOTING**: Set up two or more goals with cones and place several balls 5 yds out, 5 ft apart and parallel to the goal. On a signal, the player will start by shooting the ball at one end through the goal opening (mouth), run back around and shoot the next ball through the goal and so on until all of the balls in the line have been shot.

**GOAL-TO-GOAL SHOOTING**: Set up a field 20 yds long X 10 yds wide with goals at each end. Put an equal number of players at each end of the field with a soccer ball at their feet. On a signal, all players are to dribble the length of the field while avoiding contact with the other players and shoot at the goal. They love this game!

## DEFENSE TRAINING

Typically, U-6 players play defense by trying to kick the ball from their opponent's feet and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. If they gain possession of the ball from the opponent, well done!

**TACTIC**: You should teach your players another tactic of defense and that is to slow down the opponent with the ball by getting and staying in his/her way. This is called DELAYING and it is one of the three "Ds" of basic defending tactics.

**TECHNIQUE**: Proper defending technique is important to teach at this age because, if learned correctly, it will serve the player well during their soccer playing years. Teach your players to stand in a staggered stance with one foot slightly ahead of the other, knees slightly bent, hands apart and slightly in front of them and eyes focused on the ball, not the opponent. It has been called the "crouching tiger" position in some circles and the kids love to hear this. Show them how to switch feet position when the opponent changes direction.

## DEFENDING GAMES:

**SHARK AND MINNOWS**: See description under DRIBBLING.

**1 Vs 1:** Set up an appropriate number of 5 yd X 10 yd fields with goals for 1 Vs 1 games. Put an attacker at one end with a ball and a defender at the other end. On a signal, the attacker tries to dribble through the goal at the opposite end while the defender tries to prevent him from scoring by delaying him and possibly stealing the ball. If the defender gets possession of the ball, he immediately becomes the attacker and tries to score while the other player assumes the defender role. If the ball goes outside the field or a goal is scored, the players witch roles and continue on signal. Occasionally switch a player from each field to another field for varied experience.

## SCRIMMAGES –THE GAME IS THE TEACHER

Allow some time in each training session for a brief (5-10 minute) even-sided scrimmage between the players on your team. This gives them the opportunity to use the skills you are teaching them and to experience what a real game will feel like. Observe and make mental notes for ideas for the next training session, but let them play with minimal interference.