INTRODUCTION

Congratulations. You are the coach of your child's U-10 soccer team. **RELAX!! Take a deep breath.** You're going to do just fine. All of the trainers and coaches of Gulf Coast Soccer Club's competitive teams welcome you to the Club. The effort that you offer to the Club in coaching this team will help us to continue to develop strong and competitive soccer players. We want you to enjoy your experience as the one they call "Coach." So, we stand ready to assist you in any way we can. This Handbook is our first step in making your coaching experience a rewarding one.

REMEMBER : Soccer is the most popular game in the world because it is the simplest game in the world. To succeed in the game, all you must do is put a little ball into a gigantic goal. When the game becomes too complicated, some players become frustrated and the coach can become frustrated too.

OUR PRIMARY JOB, as recreational coaches, is to keep this simple game fun. When players learn new and creative ways to dribble and to shoot and pass and – most importantly – score, they are having fun. Listening to adults talking is usually the exact opposite of fun for young children. When we keep our instructions short and simple, we minimize the chances that our young players will become bored and confused, and maximize the chances that they will learn the skills they need to succeed. The things we teach players at this age, they will use for as long as they play soccer.

PURPOSE OF HANDBOOKS

In the U-6 Handbook we focused our attention on dribbling skills and introduced shooting. More than anything else, beginning players want to put the ball in the goal. To score goals, players must, above all other skills, be able to control the ball with both feet.

In the U-8 Handbook we addressed some intermediate dribbling and shooting skills. Ball control remains the most important skill we can teach at this age level. We also introduced skills designed to help the players to learn how to maintain possession of the ball, such as shielding and trapping. The idea of making a "positive first touch" can be introduced at U-8. Finally, we introduced some defensive concepts. If the opposing team has the ball, we can't score unless we get it back – that's defense.

At the U-10 age level, ball control skills remain the most important thing we can teach to our players. Players who have played at U-6 or U-8 will be familiar with basic dribbling and shooting techniques. More advanced ball control skills can be introduced as well. Juggling, two-touch games and even some one-touch (for more advanced players) can be featured in our training sessions. A strong re-emphasis on the "positive first touch" will enable your players to create space on their own.

At the U-10 level you will encounter players who have never played before. IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR THEM! The more experienced players will need to refresh their knowledge of the skills they learned in U-6 and U-8, and that provides the perfect opportunity to introduce those

same things to your new U-10 players. The games and activities used in the U-6 and U-8 Handbooks will be useful to you as refreshers.

DEFINING "SUCCESS"

On a U-10 roster you will have a maximum of 10 players. Your Fall season will last about 10 weeks. No one at the Club, and none of the parents on your team can expect all 10 of your players to be ready for U.S. National Team duty at the end of this season. If all of your players learn some of what you are teaching, you have been a successful coach. If, by the end of your season, half of your players can perform half of the skills you have introduced this season then you've been a phenomenal success. And if you and your team have enjoyed the soccer season and can't wait to come back next Spring for the short season, then you may just be on your way to the soccer coaches' Hall of Fame.

INTRODUCTION TO NEW CONCEPTS

U10 Players are capable of learning more teamwork oriented concepts. In addition to sharpening the ball control skills previously introduced the following skills can be introduced at this age level:

1. The single most important aspect of team play in this game is COMMUNICATION.
2. Players at this age will be able to understand the idea of moving without the ball to create options to receive passes.
3. Passing techniques can be introduced using all parts of the foot.
4. As players gain more confidence they will begin using the whole field to begin attacks.
5. As players learn to use the whole field to attack, they will figure out that they must also defend the whole field. This allows us to introduce concepts of team defense.
6. At this age it's also time to introduce Goalkeeping as the last line of defense AND the first touch in the attack.

OFFENSE: 1st attacker, 2nd attacker, 3rd attacker create width and depth. Like an umbrella opening, once we get the ball we want to spread the field and make the defense spread out too.

Attacking Ideas: **"3 S's"** – Speed, Support and Surprise

The 1st Attacker has the ball and challenges the defense, dribbling with **Speed**.

The 2nd Attacker(s) is close to the 1st Attacker and moves into position to **Support** the attack by receiving passes.

The 3rd Attacker(s) is farther from the ball and makes runs farther away from the ball towards the goal, so that a quick pass to the 3rd Attacker will **Surprise** the unsuspecting defense with a quick shot.

Once your players understand the basics of Attacking, you can introduce some other attacking concepts:

– COMMUNICATION: Call for different kinds of passes – "square," "drop," "through," "line."

– COMMUNICATION: Tell teammates when defensive pressure is coming – "man on."
– Movement without the ball – bent runs, overlaps and diagonal runs.
– Keep your shoulders facing the ball – remain "side on" the ball – to receive a pass you must be ready to receive a pass.
– Play the way you are facing – too many turns with the ball will result in dispossession.
– Play to open space – positive first touches, passes into space and not always to a teammate's feet.
– Beginnings of one-touch passes, wall passes, chip passes.
– Introduce heading.
– RE-EMPHASIZE to shoot low and to corners. No one ever missed the goal by shooting *under* the net. But lots of forwards miss the goal by shooting *over* it.

DEFENSE: 1st defender, 2nd defender, 3rd defender – together they should learn to maintain a defensive shape. This shape is usually like a closing umbrella – the closer the Attackers get to our goal the more compact we become, like a closing umbrella. When we get the ball back, we can expand our shape.

Individual defense: **4 "P's"** of Defense: Patience, Patience, Patience and Positioning.
– Patience– stabbing at the ball will result in the attacker getting by you.
– Patience– attackers will make a bad touch, and that's when you can get it from them.
– Patience– use good form when shepherding, quick feet.
– Positioning– marking players ball side and goal side. What's it mean? Quite simply, stay between the Attacker with the ball and the goal.

Introduce Team Defense: Delay, Disrupt, Destroy – **"3D Defense."**
– 1st Defender stops the ball – **Delays** the attack until help arrives.
– 2nd Defender(s) cuts off passing lanes – **Disrupts** short passing options by staying ball side of 2nd attacker(between the ball and the attacker).
– 3rd Defender(s) eliminates long passing options – **Destroys** the attack by loosely marking the 3rd Attacker, forcing the 1st Attacker to hold the ball until other defenders can pressure the ball or until the 1st Attacker makes a bad pass or loses possession.

COACHING ON MATCH DAY

Tension on the sidelines means tension on the field. If you stay calm, the kids will stay calm. Similarly, if the parents of your players stay calm, the kids will stay calm. The idea remains to have a good time.

Tips for pre-match warmup: Do an activity for warmup that you have already done at practice. Simply lining the players up and having them shoot at the goalkeeper doesn't simulate the game very well. However, you have designed your practice sessions to create game-like conditions. So, use the positive things you've done at practice to prepare your team to play the match. Pick out the team's favorite practice game, and use it to warm up before the match. It will help the team to relax, and to get into a familiar rhythm.

Add a little bit of stretching after they've run around a little bit. Kids this age don't need to stretch all that much. However, this will give you time to address the lineup, and any last minute instructions. Most of all, it allows the team to gather their thoughts in a team environment.

Halftime: Pick one (and maybe two, at maximum) coaching points to address. Information overload at halftime, will only result in confusion. Eight and nine year old kids ordinarily won't respond well to fiery halftime talks, especially if they're tired. A positive message coupled with a lot of water or a little Gatorade – no oranges – will do the trick. Save the oranges and other snacks for after the game.

Post-match analysis: The absolute worst time to critique the team's performance – either in a positive way or in a negative way – is immediately after the match. The kids are all wound up and they probably will not hear a word you say. If they have won the match they want to enjoy the moment. If they have lost the match they might need a short bit of encouragement. Win or lose, most of the players on your team will have moved on emotionally from that match within an hour. Two minutes or so to congratulate them for working so hard should suffice. Use the first 5 minutes of your next practice to go over the things you saw in the match.

ALWAYS have your team do a "cool down" after the match. Something as simple as jogging together across the field to applaud their parents, thanking them for watching the match will be sufficient. As they get older, their coaches will require a post-match cool down and post-match stretch, so we should introduce that concept now.

CONCLUSION

We hope that you have noticed that our Handbook emphasizes "success" rather than "winning." There will come a time, in the very near future, when winning the matches will be very important. If the children you are coaching decide to play competitive soccer, either at the club level or in high school, winning the matches will become their primary concern. However, at eight and nine years old, the players' main worry after the match will be the quality of the snacks provided by the Team Parent. If we do our jobs well as recreational coaches, the players we coach will enjoy themselves and will be better prepared to play well in the more competitive environments to come.

More than anything else, our Club's success will be defined by whether the players we coach are enjoying the experience. The trainers and coaches of our competitive teams want to help you to succeed in any way that we can. E-mail us, call us, ask us for advice. Become a frequent visitor to our website: www.gulfcoastsoccer.org. If we don't know the answer to your question, we have access to resources that can help you to find answers. Above all – enjoy yourself! Coaching soccer can be as much FUN as playing. If you enjoy your experience, chances are your players are enjoying themselves too.

ATTACHMENTS

Your Handbook should include the following attachments:

1. "Hawk Talk" – our glossary of soccer terms to use in teaching communication skills to your team.

2. A set of Dribbling Activities you can use during practice.

3. A set of Passing Activities you can use during practice.

4. A set of Heading Activities you can use during practice.

5. A set of Shooting Activities you can use during practice.

6. A set of Goalkeeping Activities you can use during practice.

These activities are basic games and drills you can use to emphasize certain skills at practice. None of these games are mandatory, and there are literally millions of them out there. Let us know if you want some more!!

RESOURCES

The Activities included in the attachments can be found in the following reference materials:

Youth Soccer Drills: 77 Drills for Beginning and Intermediate Players by Jim Garland;

Soccer Practice Games: 120 Games for Technique, Training and Tactics by Joe Luxbacher;

Challenger's Top 100 Soccer Practices by Peter Arch, Challenger Sports – British Soccer.

DRIBBLING ACTIVITIES

PASSING ACTIVITIES

SHOOTING ACTIVITIES

HEADING ACTIVITIES

GOALKEEPING ACTIVITIES