

Chemung Valley Soccer Association

U8 & U9

Coaches Hand Book

Introduction to U8/U9's

The typical seven and eight year old's are still very egocentric, but their coordination, balance and agility is developing rapidly and a growing technical range allows some players to be quite sophisticated in their individual play. They are beginning to think in terms of small groups, making planned passing more of a realistic tactical option. They can only kick the ball accurately over a short distance and they still do not like to deal with balls coming out of the air. They can dribble away from pressure and they are beginning to understand that the game can have a rhythm other than "bee-hive ball" Their range of techniques can include a number of different kicking surfaces and textures, but their vision for the game is almost exclusively after possession is secured. They will move to open areas to receive passes when given time to assess how to help their teammates and they are capable of playing and practicing with restrictions and more complicated rules. They do not understand offsides fully.

Typical Characteristics of Players Under 9

- They tend to play well in pairs and enjoy playing with a partner.
- They can see another's perspective and have a sense of how others are feeling.
- Everything is in the here and now; forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.
- Heating and cooling systems are less efficient – they need frequent water breaks (every 15-20 minutes)
- They still feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too.
- Limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, up to 20 minutes when engaged in a task) – this may vary greatly on any given day depending on school, diet, etc. Try to get a gauge each day and do not fight crankiness
- They have a sense of time and sequence; "If I do this, then that happens"
- Still seek out adult approval – be supportive when they ask you how they are doing or show you skills. They very much need reassurance and you need to help build their confidence to try new things at this age.
- Very aware of adult reactions. Be aware of your verbal and non-verbal reactions, they will look to your reactions frequently.
- Unable to think abstractly – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic for most children
- Have learned how to control their speed, they no longer have two speeds.
- Wide range of abilities between children at this age – children all develop at varying paces. You may have an 8 year-old who seems more like a 10 year-old and one that

seems more like a 6 year-old on the same team. Your challenge is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player.

- Some will keep score – some kids are more competitive than others. Surely some parents are fueling the kids with their own competitiveness. Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age. Results should not be important at this age.
- They are beginning to develop motor memories – by attempting fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

At this level, the primary concern of the adults is to provide activities that cater to frequent ball contacts and the development of basic motor skills. One-player-one-ball or two-player-one-ball activities and various “fun games” are excellent complements to small-sided soccer games. All activities should include every player. Keep the focus on having fun and keeping busy. Here are some key points to keep in mind:

- At this age kids participate in an activity because they can play and have FUN!
- If they don't have fun...they quit
- If the activity is too hard they quit, too easy and they get bored
- Winning isn't the main objective...it should be how well THEY performed
- They don't know strategy or tactics...they just know how they play
- They learn skills through fun games
- They learn by having as much contact with the ball as possible
- They learn by playing all the different positions on the team
- When they are on the side lines...they can't wait to get back into the game
- Each kid learns at their own rate

YOU, AS A COACH, ARE AN INCREDIBLY POWERFUL ROLE MODEL!

Planning for the Season

PARENT ORIENTATION MEETING

To make this season run smoothly:

- Hold a parent/coach meeting at the beginning of your first practice session. The invested time will pay dividends for all concerned throughout the season

The Purpose of a Parent Orientation Meeting

- Enable parents to understand the objectives of the team
- Allows parents to become acquainted with you, the coach
- Articulate your expectations of them and of their children
- Enable you to address any parents' concerns
- Establish clear lines of communication between you, parents, and players
- Allow you to obtain parental support (assistant coaches, team parents, etc.)

How Do You Conduct The Meeting?

Introduce Yourself

- Introduce yourself and assistant coaches (or ask for volunteers at this time).
- Give background information about yourself (why you are coaching, experience)

Talk About Your Coaching Philosophy

- Discuss the philosophy of age appropriate activities.
- State the importance you assign to having fun and developing technique.
- State how you evaluate player development through **skills** and not winning
- Discuss any team rules and guidelines (i.e., must be there 15 min. before kickoff)
- Let them know that all players will receive equal playing time

Discuss Team Guidelines

- Specifics of the program (e.g. players must appear with proper shoes, socks, shin guards and a properly inflated ball).
- Discuss how players must respect opponents, coaches, officials, and the game itself
- Required equipment (shirts, socks, shorts, shin guards, water bottle)
- Recommended size of ball (size 4) and soccer shoes
- Briefly discuss rules of the game

Discuss Team Management

- Have a sign up for parents to assist with team duties (i.e. snack schedule)

Discuss Parent Responsibilities, such as

- Do not coach your child during games. Transport your child to and from practices and games on time.
- Be supportive of all the players (criticism does not improve performance).
- Help your child understand that he/she is contributing to a team effort.
- Focus on mastering skills and having fun, not winning.
- Refrain from criticizing the opponents; be positive with all players.
- Respect the referees (They will make mistakes, but they are doing their best)

PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH COACHING

- All activities should be age appropriate.
- Give clear, concise **brief** instructions and correct information
- There should be a flow of simple to complex activities that is appropriate for the ability of the players and the topic of the practice.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate practice area
- Eliminate drills where children stand in line. If players are not moving the activity will not keep their interest.
- All activities should promote decision-making.
- All practices should finish with a small-sided scrimmage.

Furthermore, As a Role Model Coach

- Demonstrate leadership, good sportsmanship, respect, and coach with humility.
- Treat each player fairly
- Organize practices and teach the game through age appropriate activities and games
- Provide a safe environment; i.e. Inspect playing surface and report any issues to your area representative.
- Arrive at practice on time and remain until a parent picks up every child.
- Maintain a consistent practice schedule, don't vary the times or location of practice.
- Contribute positively to the development of each player's self-esteem
- Give regular feedback to players
- Allow each player to play 50% of every game
- Respect referees, know the rules, and conduct yourself respectfully on the field
- Continue to seek coaching education
- Define player Responsibilities:
 - Bring proper equipment to each practice and game.
 - Have your own ball and make sure that it is properly inflated.

- Inform the coach in advance if it is necessary to miss a game.
 - Try your best at each practice.
 - Work toward good sportsmanship and teamwork.
 - Respect the referees.
 - Be supportive of teammates all of the time.
- Answer questions from the parents.

The Practice

Under 9 years: 2nd and 3rd graders

- Effective coaching means, we, the coaches need to understand how the 7-8 year old thinks and what makes an activity fun for them.
 - Attention span is growing – activities can start to become a little more complex
 - High energy level – keep players moving and involved
 - Becoming less self-centered - enjoy playing with others
 - Responds well to positive encouragement – smiles and praise
 - Since they like working in pairs passing and shooting can be introduced
 - Still love to play games – use games as a tool to teach
- Skills that should be focused on at this age:
 - Dribble with all sides of both feet
 - Dribble out of trouble
 - Dribble past someone
 - Changes of direction and turns
 - Soft first touch
 - Receiving the ball with the inside and outside of the foot
 - Ball Protection (i.e. Shielding)
 - Shooting with both feet (with inside of foot and laces)
 - Passing with inside and outside of both feet
 - Juggling with both feet and thighs (allow one bounce between juggles if needed)
 - Throw-ins
 - Introduce proper defending techniques
 - Introduce basic goalkeeping techniques

Make sure the players spend time practicing skills with both feet.

- Tactics that should be focused on at this age:
 - 1 v 1 (attacking and defending)
 - 2 v 1 (attacking and defending)
 - 2 v 2 (attacking and defending)

The First Practice of the season

First impressions last a long time. Make sure your season starts off on the right foot by considering how you will handle your first practice of the season. The following is a suggested way to handle things.

Prepare

- Before you leave the house, check to make sure you have soccer balls, cones, pinnies, team list, and a practice plan.
- Other items that are useful include extra water bottle and air pump.

When you arrive

- Set up a 30'x30' grid, it is easiest to space cones every 6' to track the distance easily.
- As players show up, greet them, give them a ball, and ask them to dribble around in the grid to get used to their ball while we wait for the other kids to arrive. Note: the first thing the kids will want to do when they arrive is shoot on the net. Don't let them do this until after you have gone over the safety rules.

Once all of the players arrive

- Introduce yourself and go over the team safety rules and basic rules of soccer (no hands, cannot push or kick other players, must wear shin guards, no jewelry allowed, etc.)
- Have each child dribble the ball around the field and ask the kids some questions about the soccer field to see what they already know about the game, ask them about the lines on the outside of the field
- Space the kids out in the penalty area and work on ball touches (20 min)
 - Toe touches – Place the ball just in front of your toes and touch the top of the ball with the ball of your feet without moving the ball, alternating feet - first the right foot then left (30 times).
 - Foundations – Place the ball between your feet, with the inside of your feet tap the ball from your right foot to your left foot, without moving forward or backward (30 times).
 - Sole Roll - Place the ball between your feet, using your right foot roll the ball of your foot across your body pulling the ball with it stop the ball with your left foot. (10 times each foot)
 - Juggling – First start by having the kids bounce the ball from their knee and catch it. Challenge them to bounce it twice or from one knee to the other.
- That may be all you can accomplish in the first night as it will be time to play a game; play 3v3 or 4v4 with no goalies, just give the kids some basic advice (don't fight over the ball with your team mates, try and dribble the ball around the other team, try and look up once in a while so that you don't run into another player, etc.) and then just let them play (30 min)
- Always remember that this will be a challenging game for many kids, soccer skills take years to master so do not expect too much too soon
- At the end of the session, offer a bit of praise and remind the kids that if they want to learn how to play soccer then they should practice at school and at home with friends, brothers and sisters, mom and dad, or even by themselves, the best way to improve is to play the game as much as possible

Example Practice Plans

Weeks 1-2

- **Dribbling in a square (5-7 min)**

Set up a 30'x30' grid, it is easiest to space cones every 6' to track the distance easily.

Focus on keeping the ball close and under control at all times. Encourage dribbling with both the inside and outside of the feet.

Walk around as the kids dribble and challenge them to make a move around you.

- **Footwork Skills (5 min)**

Space the kids out in the penalty area and work on ball touches

For each of the following skills stop the kids and demonstrate the proper technique

- Toe touches – Place the ball just in front of your toes and touch the top of the ball with the ball of your feet without moving the ball, alternating feet - first the right foot then left (30 times).
- Foundations – Place the ball between your feet, with the inside of your feet tap the ball from your right foot to your left foot, without moving forward or backward (30 times).
- Sole Roll - Place the ball between your feet, using your right foot roll the ball of your foot across your body pulling the ball with it stop the ball with your left foot. (10 times each foot)
- Juggling – First start by having the kids bounce the ball from their knee and catch it. Challenge them to bounce it twice or from one knee to the other.

- **Throw-ins (5 min)**

Space half the kids out on the end line with the other half 6' across from them.

Demonstrate the proper throw-in technique emphasizing both feet on the ground and the ball over the head.

- **Sharks and Minnows (10 min)**

Set up a 30'x30' grid, it is easiest to space cones every 6' to track the distance easily (the center circle works as well). Quickly demonstrate how to shield the ball from a Shark and explain to keep the ball under control and close to their feet.

- Every child is given a ball and are the Minnows and the coach is the Shark
- The kids dribble in the grid trying to defend their ball from the Shark
- When a Shark knocks a Minnows ball out of the grid have the player do (10) toe touches or foundations to get back in the game.

- Clean your room (2 min/game)

Split into two teams one on each side of the midfield line. Quickly demonstrate the proper kicking technique, inside of the foot and with the laces.

- Each player gets a ball and tries to clean their side of the field by kicking the ball as hard as possible to the other side of the midfield line.
- Kids are not allowed to cross the midfield line to get a ball.
- At the end of the time count the balls on each side of the field and declare a winner, redistribute the balls and play again.

- 3v3 or 4v4 Scrimmage (20 min)

Split into multiple teams with no goalies and set up 20' x 30' grids with cones for goals. Give the kids some basic advice,

- Don't fight over the ball with your team mates
- Try and dribble the ball around the other team
- Try and look up once in a while so that you don't run into another player

Then just let them play, having parents help out by delivering a ball into the playing area if it goes out of bounds.

Weeks 3-4

- **Dribbling in a square (5 min)**

Set up a 30'x30' grid, it is easiest to space cones every 6' to track the distance easily.

Focus on keeping the ball close and under control at all times. Encourage dribbling with both the inside and outside of the feet.

Walk around as the kids dribble and challenge them to make a move around you.

- **Footwork Skills (5 min)**

Space the kids out in the penalty area and work on ball touches

For each of the following skills stop the kids and demonstrate the proper technique

- Toe touches – Place the ball just in front of your toes and touch the top of the ball with the ball of your feet without moving the ball, alternating feet - first the right foot then left (30 times).
- Foundations – Place the ball between your feet, with the inside of your feet tap the ball from your right foot to your left foot, without moving forward or backward (30 times).
- Sole Roll - Place the ball between your feet, using your right foot roll the ball of your foot across your body pulling the ball with it stop the ball with your left foot. (10 times each foot)
- Juggling – First start by having the kids bounce the ball from their knee and catch it. Challenge them to bounce it twice or from one knee to the other.

- **Goalkeeper Basics (10 min)**

Demonstrate the basics of goalkeeping

- Show the players where the goalkeeper can use their hands. (inside the large box)

Stance and Shuffle (5min) –

- Introduce the idea of proper body positioning and keeping square to the shooter. Goalie position is feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, head up, hands at sides, palms up facing the shooter. Players should practice by moving around the grid maintaining proper goalie position. At coaches signal players must lie face down on the ground and then spring back up to goalie ready position as quickly as possible.

Stopping the Ball (5 min)-

- Players practice with a partner rolling the ball to each other and practice scooping it up with the proper technique
- If the ball is played close to the keeper, the keeper dips one knee down just above the ground, scoops up the ball with both hands, and pulls ball into body to protect it. If ball is played away from the keeper, the keeper must dive to one side, extend both arms with palms facing the ball to block the ball. Ball is pulled into body and keeper comes up for protection. Keeper always starts in proper ready position.

- Sharks and Sharks (10 min)

Same as Sharks and Minnows but everyone is a Shark and try to kick the other Sharks balls out of the area.

- Remind the kids that they need to keep control of their ball when they try and kick out other Sharks balls.

- Goal kicks (5 min)

Demonstrate the Fundamentals of goal kicks

- Show the players where they need to stand when defending against a goal kick. (outside the large box)
 - Explain that the ball needs to leave the large box before a player touches it.
- Demonstrate where players should set up when they are taking a goal kick.
- Split the team and have half as offense and the others as defense taking the goal kick.
 - Explain that the defender on the side taking the kick should move to the side of the large box for a short and easy kick.

- 3v3 or 4v4 Scrimmage (20 min)

Split into multiple teams with no goalies and set up 20' x 30' grids with cones for goals. Give the kids some basic advice,

- Don't fight over the ball with your team mates
- Try and dribble the ball around the other team
- Try and look up once in a while so that you don't run into another player

Then just let them play, having parents help out by delivering a ball into the playing area if it goes out of bounds.

Weeks 5-6

- **Dribbling in a square (5 min)**

Set up a 30'x30' grid, it is easiest to space cones every 6' to track the distance easily.

Focus on keeping the ball close and under control at all times. Encourage dribbling with both the inside and outside of the feet.

Walk around as the kids dribble and challenge them to make a move around you.

- **Footwork Skills (5 min)**

Space the kids out in the penalty area and work on ball touches

For each of the following skills stop the kids and demonstrate the proper technique

- Toe touches – Place the ball just in front of your toes and touch the top of the ball with the ball of your feet without moving the ball, alternating feet - first the right foot then left (30 times).
- Foundations – Place the ball between your feet, with the inside of your feet tap the ball from your right foot to your left foot, without moving forward or backward (30 times).
- Sole Roll - Place the ball between your feet, using your right foot roll the ball of your foot across your body pulling the ball with it stop the ball with your left foot. (10 times each foot)
- Juggling – First start by having the kids bounce the ball from their knee and catch it. Challenge them to bounce it twice or from one knee to the other.

- **Corner kicks (5 min)**

Demonstrate the Fundamentals of corner kicks

- Show the players where they need to stand when defending against a corner kick.
 - Defender on the side closest to the ball puts their shoulder on the near post of the goal.
 - Midfield on the near side comes back to cover the short pass.
- Demonstrate where players should set up when they are taking a corner kick.
- Split the team and have half as defense and the others as offense taking the corner kick.

- **50/50 Challenge (15 min)**

Place a goalkeeper in the goal and divide the team into two lines, each at the intersection of the 6 yard box and the end line.

- Stand behind the goal with all the balls and instruct the kids to chase after the ball when you throw it and the first to the ball is offense and the other acts as a defender.
- The play is active until either the offense takes a shot and scores or shoots it out of bounds or the defense takes it far down the field or shoots it out of bounds.

- 3v3 or 4v4 Scrimmage (20 min)

Split into multiple teams with no goalies and set up 20' x 30' grids with cones for goals. Give the kids some basic advice,

- Don't fight over the ball with your team mates
- Try and dribble the ball around the other team
- Try and look up once in a while so that you don't run into another player

Then just let them play, having parents help out by delivering a ball into the playing area if it goes out of bounds.

Weeks 7-8

- **Dribbling in a square (5 min)**

Set up a 30'x30' grid, it is easiest to space cones every 6' to track the distance easily.

Focus on keeping the ball close and under control at all times. Encourage dribbling with both the inside and outside of the feet.

Walk around as the kids dribble and challenge them to make a move around you.

- **Footwork Skills (5 min)**

Space the kids out in the penalty area and work on ball touches

For each of the following skills stop the kids and demonstrate the proper technique

- Toe touches – Place the ball just in front of your toes and touch the top of the ball with the ball of your feet without moving the ball, alternating feet - first the right foot then left (30 times).
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- Sole Roll - Place the ball between your feet, using your right foot roll the ball of your foot across your body pulling the ball with it stop the ball with your left foot. (10 times each foot)
- Juggling – First start by having the kids bounce the ball from their knee and catch it. Challenge them to bounce it twice or from one knee to the other.

- **Instep Shooting Drill (10 min)**

Setup a 30' x 30' grid and place 4-5 tall cones spread out in the middle of the grid. Divide the team into groups of 2. Have the partners stand on opposite sides of the grid facing each other. Each group of 2 needs a ball.

- Players get points for knocking over a cone by driving the ball to their partner's side of the grid with the instep of their foot.
- Their partner returns the ball in the same manner.
- Demonstrate the proper technique of striking the ball with the shoelaces, toe pointed down, ankle locked, non-kicking foot should be next to the ball slightly behind it and pointed toward the target. Players should try and land on their kicking foot.
- Vary this by having them pass the ball with the inside of their foot if shooting is becoming frustrating.

- **The Numbers Game (15 min)**

Set up a 20' x 30' grid with cones for goals. Split the kids up into equal groups and give them each a number with each team getting the same numbers.

- Have them stand on the sideline instructing them which is their goal, roll out a ball into the field and call out a number.
 - The kids with the number go out and play 1 v. 1 until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds.
 - Vary the drill by calling out multiple numbers.
- Encourage the players to take on their opponent.
 - Encourage the players to shoot when they have a chance of a goal.
 - Instruct the players to protect the ball when necessary.

- **3v3 or 4v4 Scrimmage (20 min)**

Split into multiple teams with no goalies and set up 20' x 30' grids with cones for goals. Give the kids some basic advice,

- Don't fight over the ball with your team mates
- Try and dribble the ball around the other team
- Try and look up once in a while so that you don't run into another player

Then just let them play, having parents help out by delivering a ball into the playing area if it goes out of bounds.

Weeks 9-10

- **Dribbling in a square (5 min)**

Set up a 30'x30' grid, it is easiest to space cones every 6' to track the distance easily.

Focus on keeping the ball close and under control at all times. Encourage dribbling with both the inside and outside of the feet.

Walk around as the kids dribble and challenge them to make a move around you.

- **Footwork Skills (5 min)**

Space the kids out in the penalty area and work on ball touches

For each of the following skills stop the kids and demonstrate the proper technique

- Toe touches – Place the ball just in front of your toes and touch the top of the ball with the ball of your feet without moving the ball, alternating feet - first the right foot then left (30 times).
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- Juggling – First start by having the kids bounce the ball from their knee and catch it. Challenge them to bounce it twice or from one knee to the other.

- **Introduce Throw-In Strategy (5 min)**

The general idea when throwing the ball into play is to put the ball where a player on your team can stop it with a part of the body where they can immediately play it and keep possession. Other options are:

- Throw the ball ahead of a running player so they can run onto it
- Throw the ball to the feet of an open player
- Throw the ball to the chest of an open player so they can knock it down and play it
- Throw the ball to an open player and have the receiver play the ball back to the thrower.

- **The Square Game (15 min)**

Set up 20' x 20' squares with cones. Split the kids up into groups of three.

- Have each of the players stand by different cones.
- The idea for the drill is to never leave a cone adjacent to the ball open.



- If the ball is at cone #1 the players should be at cones # 2 & 3. If the ball is then passed to the player at cone #2 the player at cone #3 should quickly run over to cone #4 to support the pass.
 - Vary the drill by adding a defender inside the square to put pressure on the passers.
 - Encourage the players to quickly move to the open cone.
 - Encourage the players to anticipate where they will need to be as soon as the ball is passed.
- 3v3 or 4v4 Scrimmage with throw-ins (25 min)

Split into multiple teams with no goalies and set up 20' x 30' grids with cones for goals. Give the kids some basic advice,

- Don't fight over the ball with your team mates
- Try and dribble the ball around the other team
- Try and look up once in a while so that you don't run into another player

Then just let them play, if the ball goes out of bounds have one of the players use the proper throw-in technique to put it back into play.

References

The following sources were the principal references used in creating the Chemung Valley Soccer Association (CVSA) coaching manual:

- US Soccer Federation (USSF)
 - US Soccer Youth Soccer – Coaching Education (2016)
 - Player Development Initiative (2015)
 - Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States – Player Development Guidelines (2005)

- US Youth Soccer Coaching Manual (2012)
- US Youth Soccer Player Development (2006)
- Soccer: How to Coach Your Child, Smith Owen