

## **“Begin with the End in Mind”**

Vince Ganzberg

IYSA Director of Coaching and Player Development

The phrase above is one that I used to use a lot when I would prepare a lesson plan when I was a teacher. I also used it when I coached as well. Coaches should think about every training session and what they would like to accomplish. What do they want their players to be better at? What were some of the problems that we had in the match last Saturday? What were some of the good points about our match on Saturday? Where do I begin?? As a coach you may only see your players only once or twice a week depending on the age. You are simply not going to be able to teach them at a mastery level all of the different aspects of the game. So it is vital that you prioritize what you want your players to learn throughout the short season so that their understanding and love of the game is developed.

I have listed below maybe some priorities for you to look at when teaching the game at certain age groups. Below will be a list of simply ideas that I believe is important to keep in mind with certain age groups, but the main thing is that they have fun. They should always look forward to practice and better yet, they sign up the next season because of their experience that they had. For this issue, I will just focus on the U6 to U12 age groups. The next issue of Heads Up, I will go into some of the important items to stress with the U13 to U18 groups.

**This is not a curriculum.** These are just ideas that maybe you can use when coaching in these specific age groups to give you a start when preparing a practice. Make sure that you don't get all caught up in it either. When it is all said and done, they should all have been moving quite a lot during the practice, running and knocking the ball around and then running to their mini vans with smiles on their faces.

### **Priorities**

#### **U6's**

- Being comfortable with the ball at their feet-Dribbling
- Everyone has a ball-Dribbling
- Fundamental movements like running, jumping, bending, skipping, reaching, throwing, catching.
- Need to explore a rolling and bouncing ball
- Games that teach dribbling and turning the ball with their feet
- Play small sided games of 3v3/4v4
- Teach shape, not positions. For 3v3, the shape is a triangle. For 4v4, the shape is a diamond. For the U6's, however, it will become more of a 1v7 match instead of a 3v3/4v4 match. Just getting them to start in either a triangle or a diamond at the beginning of the game, a kickoff, or a kick-in is a good starting point.
- Fun!

#### **U8's**

- Being comfortable with the ball at their feet-Dribbling
- Everyone has a ball-Dribbling
- Games that teach dribbling with the head up, turning, and keeping the ball away from an opponent.
- Games that encourage them being creative with the ball-Dribbling
- Fundamental movements like running, jumping, bending, skipping, reaching, throwing, catching.
- Passing in two's. Passing should be done in motion, not static.
- Show the surfaces of the foot to pass the ball with.
- Introduce striking the ball with the laces.
- Developing the mentality to shoot.
- Introduce receiving (not trapping) balls on the ground
- Play small sided games of 3v3/4v4
- Teach shape, not positions. For 3v3, the shape is a triangle. For 4v4, the shape is a diamond. Just getting them to start in either a triangle or a diamond at the beginning of the game, a kickoff, or a kick-in is a good starting point.
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## **U-10-U12's**

### **Dribbling**

- Creativity with the ball needs to be stressed.
- How to run with the ball at the feet
- Dribbling to beat an opponent
- Dribbling to get away from pressure
- Dribbling to maintain possession
- We need to develop "front footed" dribblers. Players that are comfortable with the ball and taking on opponents face to face.

### **Passing**

- Pass on the move with both inside and outside of the foot.
- Making the simple pass-thought behind every pass.
- Making eye contact with your teammate should also be stressed heavily with passing.
- Introduction to longer types of passes

### **Finishing/Striking The Ball**

- Finishing off the dribble, while going at pace.
- Get the shot on "frame" or target.
- The ability to turn and finish
- Finishing from a pass
- Finishing a breakaway

### **Receiving**

- Developing the first (controlling) touch.
- Teach them to open “out” when receiving a ball on the ground
- Receiving balls out of the air.

### **Supporting**

- Playing 3v1 games to teach how to support the player that has the ball
- Supporting after making a pass
- Supporting after a long ball has been played.

### **Heading**

- Introduction to heading (U10's)
- Introduction to jumping and heading balls (U-12's)

### **Defending**

- The mentality to win the ball back
- Getting them to recover or pick up an opponent
- Teach the role of the first defender (Pressure) U-10's
- Teach the role of the second defender (Cover) U-11's
- Teach the role of the third defender (Balance) U-12's

**FUN!!**