



**Maple Valley  
Youth Soccer Curriculum**

**Proposed: October 26, 2007**

# US Women's National Teams Program

## POSITION STATEMENT

### 'Playing to Develop' versus 'Playing to Win' *'Learning versus Winning'*

#### Issue

In youth soccer circles today, an over emphasis is being placed on winning. It stems from social pressure in America where we are expected to be the best in everything. We glorify winning and first place finishers. The emphasis in sports on 'winning' is out of balance. Witness the increase in violence at youth athletic events. In sport, we are obsessed with the 'outcome' rather than the 'process.' As long as we win, we are happy. We evaluate coaches only on their win-loss record. What about enjoyment of the process, the journey, the experience and it's ultimate influence on us as people, coaches and athletes? What about evaluating coaches on the improvement, growth and development of their players? After all, we can't control the outcome, but we can control the process.

#### Recommendations

Admit that we're obsessed with winning. When Suzie comes home after her game, the first thing we ask is did she win and the second thing is did she score a goal? Reframe the way we look at sport. Suzie, "how was the game today? Did you have fun? Did your team play well? How did you play? Did you do some of the new things the coach asked you to try? Are you hungry?"

In youth soccer, the priority for coaches and players should be on individual player development and learning. Set age and ability specific technical, tactical, psychological, and physical goals to aid in optimizing player development. This will provide coaches a framework and structure to follow. These goals also provide an alternative for coaches and parents to measure achievement and development of their players. For under 14 and younger, the primary objective of game participation and training is to provide the players with learning opportunities. Teams should "strive to win," but this should not be the focus of any training sessions, half-time talks or player motivations.

At the age of 14 and above, careful consideration needs to be placed on balancing instances where in addition to developing as individuals and a team, finding ways to 'win' also becomes part of the overall objective. One of the biggest obstacles in women's athletics is that young girls are socialized not to be competitive. **By all means, teach players to compete, to compete hard, to compete to win, but don't have winning be the only measure of success.** Choose which tournaments and games are to be played to 'learn,' and which are to be played to, 'win.' It is not in the best interest of the players' development to have a schedule where the sole purpose for participation is 'winning.' Individual and team improvement and peak performance should be the measure of achievement, rather than winning or losing.

**It should be noted that while the US Women's National Team steps on the field prepared to win every game and every tournament, there are only two tournaments (every four years) that we play with the sole purpose of 'winning,' the Olympics and the Women's World Cup.**

At 16 years of age and below, players should be encouraged to play different positions on the field. This will allow for a greater understanding of the game.

Coaches should attempt to have players play for an extended period of time. The players are thus asked to solve their own problems on the field instead of having the coach make substitutions in order to solve the problem for them. Players should not, 'platoon players' in and out of games in order to 'wear an opponent down.' Unlike most American sports, "soccer is a players game," not a coaches game. Substitutions allow for all players to play and will speed development for a greater number of players. The coach should decide before the game or tournament what the philosophy will be regarding substitutions – then stick to it.

The system and style that the coach selects should be based on matching the skill and abilities of the players and not to achieve a 'win.' Exposing players to various systems and styles of play offers a tremendous opportunity to learn.

Care must be taken at the younger levels (U16) to select players based on their soccer abilities and not on their strength or size. It is tempting to use bigger, earlier maturing players to help you win games this year. If our aim as coaches is to develop players and teams to advance to the next level, we must be mindful of a smaller players 'potential' to be a better player in a year or two.

Lastly, player, parent, and administrator education is vital. Through communication and explanation of long term goals and rewards a coach must bring all parties to a consensus in support of this developmental philosophy. In order for these ideas to work properly, the coach must demonstrate his/her ability to develop players and teams. 'Winning,' is not a measurement of coaching success. The technical and tactical ability of the player, player and team improvement during the course of a season, player and team satisfaction, and player matriculation are the best yardsticks for success.

### **Rationale**

With sound technical, tactical, physical and psychological skills encouraged through a 'process' oriented philosophy, players will develop the necessary tools to maximize their potential. A thoughtful plan based on the level and needs of the players significantly increases the rate of retention, improvement, and enjoyment.



"There are many people, particularly in sports who think that success and excellence are the same thing and they are not the same thing. Excellence is something that is lasting and dependable and largely within a person's control. In contrast, success is perishable and is often outside our control... If you strive for excellence, you will probably be successful eventually... people who put excellence in first place have the patience to end up with success... An additional burden for the victim of the success mentality is that he/she is threatened by success of others and resents real excellence. In contrast, the person fascinated by quality is excited when he/she sees it in others."

Joe Paterno – Penn State Football Coach - 1990

### Characteristics of an Ideal Youth Soccer Club

- 1) Clear mission statement---a mission statement should clearly identify the purpose of the club and indicate what group or groups of players they serve (premier, competitive, recreational, or any combination of the three). Clubs should also indicate what their goals are as a club.
- 2) Progressive Player Development Curriculum---just like in school, a quality club should have year by year standards of expectations for players and their coaches should focus on developing players to reach those standards.
- 3) Continuous coach development program---as does any group of professionals, soccer coaches need continuous development. Licensure courses are great. However, they should be seen as the booster shot. Clinics, discussions, conventions, books, videos, game analysis sessions and more could be part of a continuous program. As educating coaches is vital to player development, clubs should insure that they cover the cost of coaching development for their coaches.
- 4) Minimum licensing standards for all coaches---educators in any field need to continue their education as their field develops and changes. Soccer coaches are educators. A very conservative licensing standard recommendation can be found in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Player Development Manual which can be downloaded off the coaching section on our website.
- 5) Within club coaching evaluation---whether you have a coaching director or use coaches to oversee each other, clubs should have coaching oversight. In an ideal world, a coaching director can watch practices of teams and help improve coaching within practices. This person could also watch games and help coaches with game analysis, player analysis, and within game coaching. The more the club coaches show a willingness to learn and to work together as a staff, the better for the club.
- 6) Standardized Player Evaluation Forms and feedback at least 2 times/year.

- 7) Parent Evaluation Form---for parents and players to provide feedback to the club as to what is working and what is not working. It is hoped parents could make suggestions for improvements.
- 8) Regular goalkeeper training---for all interested goalkeepers in the club. (should be free to players)
- 9) Open Practices---to allow players who want to train more or want to challenge themselves the opportunity to do so. This also helps create a club feel.
- 10) Financial support---for those families that cannot afford to pay for their children. No children should ever be prevented from playing because of money.
- 11) A clearly identified development plan with player development as the primary goal above winning. Winning is a by-product of quality development.
- 12) A clearly identified grievance process with a description of who to bring particular difficulties to and what are reasonable expectations.
- 13) A consistent parent education program that includes regular meetings and written information. This should address both parent expectations and club expectations.
- 14) Centrally organized tryouts---these should be run by a coaching director and with independent evaluators. Team coaches should be consulted, however tryouts should be centrally organized to prevent the influence of personal relationships.
- 15) A clear delineation of where your money is spent. Is your club a 501(c)3?
- 16) An appropriate placement for your child---if the club does not have an appropriate placement, the club should recommend a place that does to you and help with placement at that club.
- 17) A referee development program---without referees, this game will not be played and youth soccer has a desperate shortage. It is a good way for players to make some money and learn about the game.
- 18) Regular indoor training---finding indoor time is difficult, however players should be training at least 2/week for 1—1.5 hours/session throughout the winter.
- 19) An association with Speed/Agility/Strength experts---for those players who wish to participate, a club should use its size to help arrange discounted prices for programs. A club should help stress the importance of this domain for injury prevention and help with education of parents and coaches.
- 20) Provide nutritional advice to players.
- 21) Provide simple sports psychology information and mental training tips for players.
- 22) Provide hopeful collegiate players with recruiting help---a club should have a standard college recruit profile form and team profile books, as well as give players realistic expectations as to at what level they can play and serve as a reference for the player. The club should educate players and parents as to the recruiting timeline, financial aid, and how to choose a college (recognizing academics is of primary importance).
- 23) Recommend players for ODP---a club should encourage its' best players to challenge themselves further and help them compete for spots on Regional and National teams.

- 24) Fields---as mentioned, space is at a premium here in MA, so this is impossible for many. However, if a club does not have fields, they can still arrange practices in a way that allows for teams of comparable ability to scrimmage or practice together or trade coaches every so often. It may also provide players on the "cusp" a chance to train with the top team.
- 25) A different coach at least every two years---coaches all have different strengths, different ways of communication, and different views of players. Players should benefit from the strengths of multiple coaches and get a "fresh start" every couple years. Saying "1 plus 1 equals 2" may be understood better by some players versus "1 and 1 equals 2". Simple things can make a difference.
- 26) Placement of teams in competitive leagues---teams should be competing in leagues in which they win approximately 50% of the time. If teams are going 10-0 or 0-10 during the season, it does not promote development.
- 27) Practices should not include lectures, lines and laps---players should not be standing around, allowed the opportunity to lose concentration, or lectured to regularly. Practices should be fun, dynamic, active, and challenging.
- 28) Game evaluations---other coaches or a coaching director should evaluate teams during games and give the team coach feedback as to what they see as strengths and weaknesses. In addition, team coaches should fill out game reports for every game so the club can keep a binder and track the development of each team from year to year.
- 29) Annual banquet---clubs could have an annual banquet to recognize volunteers and those players who exhibit dedication, sportsmanship, and leadership. It can be a fun time with give-aways to bring the club together.
- 30) Social events---clubs should promote social events a few times each year. Whether it be a parent vs. child 3 vs. 3 tournament, or a ballroom style night for parents or a trip to the beach for players.
- 31) Support of and exposure to professional teams.
- 32) Education on the field and in the classroom---promote classroom sessions and encourage players to watch videos of games and analyze. If done with some thought this can be made a fun competition.
- 33) Be responsive---leadership should respond to concerns and questions and communicate well with membership
- 34) Proper tournament selection---team should be sent to tournaments in which they are competitive. Losing 3 games in a tournament without scoring a goal is not helpful to development. Nor is dominating a tournament helpful to development. A club should also recognize that a team should play a reasonable number of tournaments/year (~3-4 tournaments/year for teams U13 or older).
- 35) Appreciation of volunteers---volunteers are the heart and soul of every club and although many commit their time for the love of the game or the love of children, a club should still make an effort to show appreciation for the efforts of volunteers. Whether it be with thank you cards, verbal thanks, or with gifts (i.e. t-shirts or polos), some sort of appreciation should be shown.
- 36) Be nice---youth soccer can sometimes be stressful and challenging, though a club's leadership should always be nice and respectful. Of course, parents should be as well.

The purpose of this curriculum is to help standardize “best practice” soccer training, to develop coaching consistency within age groups and a developmental progression across age groups, and to teach all coaches what is best for developing players.

Every child varies in their development and these are strictly guidelines. Guidelines are meant to be flexible as all players of the same age are certainly not at the same developmental level. It is important we challenge all players at a level that befits their ability.

This information is not solely based on observation and experience in soccer, but also on research and practice in psychology, child development, physiology, child education, and learning theory. We hope all coaches will use this curriculum to help insure our players are being provided the best soccer environment possible.

## MVYSA Soccer Curriculum

### AGE GROUP:

U6-U7

In order to fully understand this age child and to make practices run as smoothly and happily as possible, it is extremely important for us to understand the following characteristics about U6/U7 children. Player development will occur most appropriately and expeditiously if all players are enjoying themselves.

### Typical Characteristics of U6/U7 Players

- Focused on themselves – reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel.
- Unable to see the world from another's perspective – it is “the world according to me” time.
- 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 than adults – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes).
- Enjoying playing, not watching – make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing.
- Limited attention span (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions concise and to the point.
- Effort is synonymous with performance – be supportive of their enthusiasm.
- Active imaginations – if we utilize their imaginations in practice activities, they will love practice!
- Look for adult approval – be encouraging when they say, “Coach, look what I can do!”
- Unable to think abstractly – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic.
- Typically have 2 speeds – extremely fast and stopped.
- Usually unaware of game scores – **we should keep it that way.**
- Often like to fall down just because it is fun!
- Often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot – they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach them left and right.



# U6 -- Session One

**Objective:** To provide fun, active, age appropriate activities that foster comfort with the ball for each player. It is important, if possible, that all players have a ball in most activities so that they can have "LOTS" of touches as they attempt to dribble (propel) the ball. (*Sessions should be about 45 minutes in duration.*)

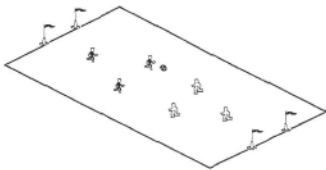
**1) Tag**--Every child dribbles a soccer ball in a defined space while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing more than one game, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game. *Version 2:* Players must tag other players' knees. (6 minutes)

**2) Hospital tag**--Same as tag in that each player dribbles a soccer ball and that they try to tag each other with their hands. In this game, each time a player is tagged he/she must place their hand on the spot on their body where they were tagged. Obviously, if tagged a third time, players have no more hands to cover those spots, so they must go to the hospital to see the doctor. The coach acts as the doctor and performs a magical task (pretend) to heal the injuries of all the little soccer players so they can continue playing the game. (8 minutes)

**3) Body Part Dribble**--In designated area, coach has all players dribble a soccer ball. When coach yells out the name of a body part, players must touch that body part to the ball as quickly as possible. Coach should vary body parts and rate at which he calls out body parts. At times, call out body parts consecutively (i.e. tummy, nose, elbow) during one stoppage or call out two body parts at once (i.e. both hands or both feet). (8 minutes)

**4) Red light/Green light**--All players have a ball and dribble in a limited space (or towards the coach). When coach says "red light", players must stop ball and put foot on top of ball. When coach says "yellow light", players must dribble very slowly. When coach says "green light", players dribble fast. Coach controls this game with the frequency of "light" changes and variety of changes. Once players catch on to this game, add other color lights and affix different actions to them. (i.e. purple light = hop back and forth over ball, orange light = run around the ball, black light = dance, blue light = hide behind the ball etc. etc.). (8 minutes)

**5) 3v3 or 4v4 Game**--Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U6 -- Session Two

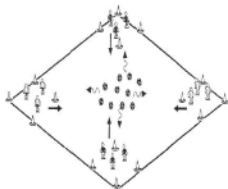
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**1) Tail Steal---** All players tuck a pennie into the back of their shorts to give themselves a tail. All players dribble their soccer ball while trying to pluck the tails of other players and trying to make sure their tail does not get plucked. Players play until the last tail is plucked. (6 minutes)

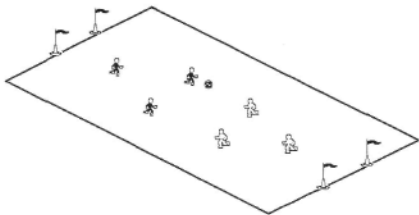
**2) Snake---**In an appropriate space, have all players dribble their soccer balls, except for 2-3 players. These players (the snake) hold hands or lock arms and work together to tag the other players. The players with dribbling balls try to avoid getting tagged by the snake. If they are tagged, they join hands or lock arms with the snake. The snake grows until all players are part of the snake. The snake must work together and not break into little parts. Encourage fun by having the snake hiss. (8 minutes)

**3) Freeze Tag---**Everyone has a ball and coach can pick one or two players who are the Freeze monsters. Freeze monsters (with ball) try and dribble around and tag other players (who also have a ball and are dribbling around). The frozen player must stand still holding their ball over their head. The way the players can become unfrozen, is if the coach comes over and unfreezes them OR the coach can have the other players unfreeze each other (by simply touching them again). If all players are frozen, game ends and the coach can have new Freeze monsters. *Version 2:* Freeze monsters can now try and freeze each other by using their soccer ball to 'tag' someone else's soccer ball or feet by kicking their ball. *Version 3:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion. (8 minutes)

**4) Capture the Balls---**Set up three or four "home bases" (squares) with cones roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break up the players into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coach's command the teams are free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home bases. Teams can steal balls from each others' home bases. Coach calls time and counts up how many balls are in each space to determine a winner. Coach allows team 1 minute to make up a new team strategy before playing again. (8 minutes)



5) **3v3 or 4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U6 --- Week Four

**Objective:** To provide fun, active, age appropriate activities that foster comfort with the ball for each player. It is important, if possible, that all players have a ball in most activities so that they can have "LOTS" of touches as they attempt to dribble (propel) the ball. (*Sessions should be about 45 minutes in duration.*)

1) **Juggling**---Everyone with a ball. Hold hands out with ball in between, drop ball directly down and kick back up to hands, etc. Players practice keeping the ball in the air with their feet and thighs. Players count how many times they touch the ball before it drops to the ground. Version 2: Controlled juggling...juggle on one thigh, then add other thigh, then add one foot, then add the other foot...thigh-thigh-foot-foot (6 minutes)

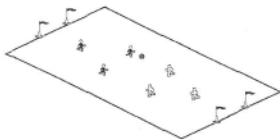
2) **Paint the Field**---Every player dribbles their ball in the area defined. You explain to them that their ball is actually a paintbrush and wherever it rolls on the ground, it paints that area. The task is to paint as much of the area as possible in the time allotted by dribbling their soccer balls all over the grid. Version 2: Can ask them to paint with only their left foot, then their right foot. (8 minutes)

3) **Red light/Green light**---All players have a ball and dribble in a limited space (or towards the coach). When coach says "red light", players must stop ball and put foot on top of ball. When coach says "yellow light", players must dribble very slowly. When coach says "green light", players dribble fast. Coach controls this game with frequency of "light changes" and variety of changes. Once players catch on to this game, add lights of other colors and affix different actions to them. (i.e. purple light = hop back and forth over ball, orange light = run around the ball, black light = dance, blue light = hide behind the ball etc. etc.). (8 minutes)

4) **Pirate Ship**---Set up a 20x20 grid (Pirate ship deck) with a small 6x6 grid (safe shark cage) just in one of the corners of the field. Coach makes up variations and adds them to their pirate ship journey one at a time. Variations on the ship can be: *Scrub the deck*-players must roll the ball back and forth with the sole of their foot, then coach can ask them to do this while moving all around the Pirate Ship deck. *Hoist the sail*-players can knock the ball back and forth between their feet (foundation), then dribble all around the Pirate Ship deck as fast as they can. *Walk the plank*-players must do toe touches on their soccer ball, then dribble all around the Pirate Ship deck as fast as they can. *Shark attack*-Coach (aka: 'Shark') runs after players and they have to try and dribble their soccer ball into the 6x6 (safe shark cage) before the 'shark' catches them. (8 minutes)



5) **3v3 or 4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



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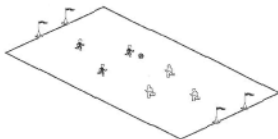
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# U6 --- Session Five

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1) **Body Part Dribble**--In designated area, coach has all players dribble a soccer ball. When coach yells out the name of a body part, players must touch that body part to the ball as quickly as possible. Coach should vary body parts and rate at which he calls out body parts. At times, call out body parts consecutively (i.e. tummy, nose, elbow) during one stoppage or call out two body parts at once (i.e. both hands or both feet). (6 minutes)

2) **Gates**--Set up many pairs of cones (with roughly 2 yards in between pairs) all around the playing area. These pairs serve as gates or many mini-goals. Players each have a ball and must dribble through the gate in order to score. Have players count how many goals they score in 30 seconds and when playing a second time ask them if they can beat their score by one goal. Coaches can vary this by asking players to dribble with left foot or right foot. If players end up dribbling back and forth through only one goal, set up a rule to protect against this. (8 minutes)

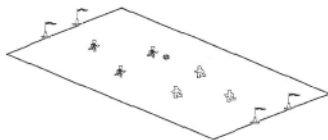


3) **Ball Tag**--Similar to other tag games except players try to tag others with their soccer ball, by kicking it at another player's feet or ball. Have them keep count of how many times they kick their soccer ball and tag another person. Can have the players tag the coach for 10 or 20 points. Then can have players tag other selected players for 50 or 100 points etc. etc. *Version 2:* Rather than having players tag each other, have them tag the coach by kicking their soccer ball. The coach moves around without a ball to avoid being tagged. Have players count up how many they got and can do the same variations as in the other game by affixing a lot of points to players. (8 minutes)



4) **Cops and Robbers**--Coach sets up 8-10 stand-up cones in a 15yd x 15yd space. Robbers all have soccer balls and knock over the cones (banks) by kicking their balls into the cones and knocking them over. Cops (have 2 or 3 cops for each game) do not have soccer balls and need to stand the cones back up (before all the banks are robbed). Rotate who gets to be cops. *Variation (If don't have stand-up cones):* ½ group (cops) take soccer balls and put on top of disc cones. Other ½ of group (robbers) try to knock over those soccer balls by kicking their soccer balls at them. Cops must replace the soccer balls on the cones as quickly as possible. (8 minutes)

5) **3v3 or 4v4 Game**--Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE THE GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U6 --- Session Six

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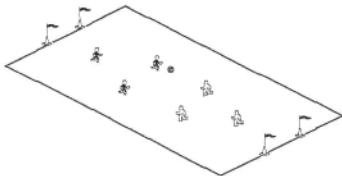
1) **Tag**---Every child dribbles a soccer ball in the space defined while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing twice in a row, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game. *Version 2:* Players must tag other players on their knees. (8 minutes)

2) **Juggling**---Everyone with a ball. Hold hands out with ball in between, drop ball directly down and kick back up to hands, etc. Players practice keeping the ball in the air with their feet and thighs. Players count how many times they touch the ball before it drops to the ground. *Version 2:* Controlled juggling...juggle on one thigh, then add other thigh, then add one foot, then add the other foot...thigh-thigh-foot-foot (6 minutes)

3) **Tail Steal**--- All players tuck a pennie into the back of their shorts to give themselves a tail. All players dribble their soccer ball while trying to pluck the tails of other players and trying to make sure their tail does not get plucked. Players play until the last tail is plucked. (6 minutes)

4) **Freeze Tag**---Everyone has a ball and coach can pick one or two players who are the Freeze monsters. Freeze monsters (with ball) try and dribble around and tag other players (who also have a ball and are dribbling around). The frozen player must stand still holding their ball over their head. The way the players can become unfrozen, is if the coach comes over and unfreezes them OR the coach can have the other players unfreeze each other (by simply touching them again). If all players are frozen, game ends and the coach can have new Freeze monsters. *Version 2:* Freeze monsters can now try and freeze each other by using their soccer ball to 'tag' someone else's soccer ball or feet by kicking their ball. *Version 3:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion. (8 minutes)

5) **3v3 or 4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U6 -- Session Seven

**Objective:** To provide fun, active, age appropriate activities that foster comfort with the ball for each player. It is important, if possible, that all players have a ball in most activities so that they can have "LOTS" of touches as they attempt to dribble (propel) the ball. (*Sessions should be about 45 minutes in duration.*)

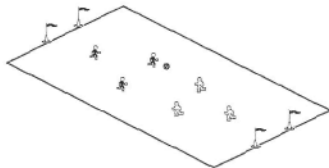
1) **Free Dribble**--Everyone dribbling a ball, using insides, outsides, and soles of their feet. Players can dribble with speed (outsides of the feet and toes), try moves of their choice or moves that the coach introduces, or they can change direction. The Coach can manipulate the session by calling out different commands..."stop, go, turn, tap". Kids can carry the ball towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, the coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction. (8 minutes)

2) **Hospital tag**--Same as tag in that each player dribbles a soccer ball and that they try to tag each other with their hands. In this game, each time a player is tagged he/she must place their hand on the spot on their body where they were tagged. Obviously, if tagged a third time, players have no more hands to cover those spots, so they must go to the hospital to see the doctor. The coach acts as the doctor and performs a magical task (pretend) to heal all the injuries of the little soccer players so they can continue playing the game. (6 minutes)

3) **Snake**--In an appropriate space, have all players dribble their soccer balls, except for 2-3 players. These players (the snake) hold hands or lock arms and work together to tag the other players. The players with dribbling balls try to avoid getting tagged by the snake. If they are tagged, they join hands or lock arms with the snake. The snake grows until all players are part of the snake. The snake must work together and not break into little parts. Encourage fun by having the snake hiss. (8 minutes)

4) **Crab Soccer**--Set up a grid roughly 8yd x 10yd. Have 3-4 players inside the grid acting as crabs. These crabs do not have a soccer ball. Other players start at one end of the grid and when the coach says "Go", they dribble their soccer balls to the other end of the grid. The crabs try to kick their soccer balls out of the grid. If a dribbler's ball goes out of the grid, that player becomes a crab as well. Play until all players turn into crabs. (8 minutes)

5) **3v3 or 4v4 Game**--Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)

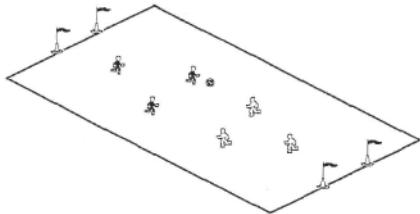




# U6 --- Session Eight

**Objective:** To provide fun, active, age appropriate activities that foster comfort with the ball for each player. It is important, if possible, that all players have a ball in most activities so that they can have "LOTS" of touches as they attempt to dribble (propel) the ball. (*Sessions should be about 45 minutes in duration.*)

- 1) Kangaroo Jack**---All players except two or three begin with a ball. Players without balls are kangaroo jacks and must hop like a kangaroo and try to tag players. If a player gets tagged, he/she becomes a kangaroo as well until all players are turned into kangaroos. (6 minutes)
- 2) Red light/Green light**---All players have a ball and dribble in a limited space (or towards the coach). When coach says "red light", players must stop ball and put foot on top of ball. When coach says "yellow light", players must dribble very slowly. When coach says "green light", players dribble fast. Coach controls this game with frequency of "light changes" and variety of changes. Once players catch on to this game, add light of other colors and affix different actions to them. (i.e. purple light = hop back and forth over ball, orange light = run around the ball, black light = dance, blue light = hide behind the ball etc. etc.). (8 minutes)
- 3) Shrek/Spiderman/Spongebob**---Place a couple players in pennies and have everyone else get a soccer ball. Set up a 20 yd x 15 yd grid and have the players with soccer balls dribble around in the space. The players in pennies are Shrek (or Spiderman or SpongeBob, etc.) and try to tag the players who have soccer balls. When players are tagged they go to into the goal (castle, spidermet etc. etc.) and can only get back out if a teammate with a ball tags them or the coach uses his/her magic powers to let everyone free. Use any character or images you like for this and make sure all players get a chance to be one of the special characters at some point during every practice. (8 minutes)
- 4) Cops and Robbers**---Coach sets up 8-10 stand-up cones in a 15yd x 15yd space. Robbers all have soccer balls and knock over the cones (banks) by kicking their balls into the cones and knocking them over. Cops (have 2 or 3 cops for each game) do not have soccer balls and need to stand the cones back up (before all the banks are robbed). Rotate who gets to be cops. *Variation (If don't have stand-up cones):* ½ group (cops) take soccer balls and put on top of disc cones. Other ½ of group (robbers) try to knock over those soccer balls by kicking their soccer balls at them. Cops must replace the soccer balls on the cones as quickly as possible. (8 minutes)
- 5) 3v3 or 4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U6 --- Session Nine

**Objective:** To provide fun, active, age appropriate activities that foster comfort with the ball for each player. It is important, if possible, that all players have a ball in most activities so that they can have "LOTS" of touches as they attempt to dribble (propel) the ball. (*Sessions should be about 45 minutes in duration.*)

1) **Juggling**---Everyone with a ball. Hold hands out with ball in between, drop ball directly down and kick back up to hands, etc. Players practice keeping the ball in the air with their feet and thighs. Players count how many times they touch the ball before it drops to the ground. *Version 2:* Controlled juggling...juggle on one thigh, then add other thigh, then add one foot, then add the other foot...thigh-thigh-foot-foot (6 minutes)

2) **Ball Tag**---Similar to other tag games except players try to tag others with their soccer ball, by kicking it at another player's feet or ball. Have them keep count of how many times they kick their soccer ball and tag another person. Can have the players tag the coach for 10 or 20 points. Then can have players tag other selected players for 50 or 100 points etc. etc. *Version 2:* Rather than having players tag each other, have them tag the coach by kicking their soccer ball. The coach moves around without a ball to avoid being tagged. Have players count up how many they got and can do the same variations as in the other game by affixing a lot of points to players. (8 minutes)



3) **Freeze Tag**---Everyone has a ball and coach can pick one or two players who are the Freeze monsters. Freeze monsters (with ball) try and dribble around and tag other players (who also have a ball and are dribbling around). The frozen player must stand still holding their ball over their head. The way the players can become unfrozen, is if the coach comes over and unfreezes them OR the coach can have the other players unfreeze each other (by simply touching them again). If all players are frozen, game ends and the coach can have new Freeze monsters. *Version 2:* Freeze monsters can now try and freeze each other by using their soccer ball to 'tag' someone else's soccer ball or feet by kicking their ball. *Version 3:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion. (8 minutes)

4) **Capture the Balls**---Set up three or four "home bases" (squares) with cones roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break up the players into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coach's command the teams are free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home bases. Teams can steal balls from each others' home bases. Coach calls time and counts up how many balls are in each space to determine a winner. Coach allows team 1 minute to make up a new team strategy before playing again. (8 minutes)



5) **3v3 or 4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)

