



**NATURE COAST
LIGHTNING**

SOCCER CLUB

www.NatureCoastSoccer.com

Player Development Guideline

U6 Co-Ed Recreational Soccer



www.naturecoastsoccer.com

Nature Coast Soccer Club Overview

Nature Coast Soccer Club (NCSC) is a non-profit youth soccer organization located in Citrus County, Florida. We offer play for recreational and competitive teams. Children can start with our club as young as four years old and up to eighteen years old. Our organization conducts their activities with the help of volunteers. Our recreational season starts in October. Our competitive seasons are August through October for our U15 – U19 teams, and October through March for our U10 – U14 teams. Our primary focus is on player development, having fun, and providing a safe environment.

Player Development – our goal is to teach the players how to play soccer to the best of their ability. To accomplish this all players are to be given equal playing time during games and attention during practice.

Having fun – the number one reason to play is to have fun. The number one reason not to play is that it's not fun. To promote fun we will encourage equal participation in practice and games, matching athletes' ability to their challenges, and by helping to set performance goals, rather than outcome goals.

Safety first – it is important to always make sure that a safe and age appropriate environment is set for games and practice.

Player Development Guideline

The goal of this document is to:

Establish clear and age appropriate goals and objectives so our coaches, players and parents know what we are working toward
Establish objectives so coaches have a common understanding of which skills players should have when they proceed to the next age group.

Establish age appropriate priorities and focus areas in the four elements of the game (technical, tactical, psychological, and physical)
Ensure consistency among our programs so we're all teaching the same way and using the same vocabulary

Create confident coaches that are better prepared

U6 Player Development

Typically a U6 player that starts at age 4 will have multiple seasons of play before he/she moves up to U8's. Our goal is to develop their basic skills so they are prepared to move up to the next level. We can't expect these young players to master everything below in a single season, but taught consistently from season to season they will get it over time. Keep this in mind as you read through this document.

Key Objectives for the U6 NCSC Program

- Have fun (players, coaches and parents)
- Get players as many touches on the ball as possible
- Introduce basic skills
- Individual and pairs activities

Transition Considerations

This for many or all of your players is the first exposure to both soccer and organized sports. They may have no frame of reference or comparative experiences.

For most U6 Players:

- They will have never played on a bounded field
- Are used playing with their own ball
- May be aware of positions (Wing, Center, Fullback, Goalie) but still lack the discipline to play any type of formation
- Soccer is about scoring goals not defending

Typical Characteristics of U6 Players

Below is a list of typical expectations and characteristics you can expect from U6 players.

1. *focused on themselves* – reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel
2. *unable to see the world from another's perspective* – it is “the world according to me” time.
3. *Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic*
4. *everything is in the here and now* – forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.
5. *heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults* – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore
6. *enjoying playing, not watching* – they feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing
7. *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. When in an open environment, such as a park, their attention span will dwindle towards 10 seconds
8. *effort is synonymous with performance* – if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm
9. *active imaginations* – if we utilize their imaginations in practice activities, they will love practice!
10. *look for adult approval* – watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!”
11. *unable to think abstractly* – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is Unrealistic
12. *typically have 2 speeds* -- extremely fast and stopped
13. *usually unaware of game scores* – we should keep it that way
14. *often like to fall down just because it is fun* – they are just children having fun
15. *often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot*

Player Development Objectives

This document will help to identify key objectives within the four key areas of player development. The priority areas will evolve for each age group progression. The key areas of player development across all age groups and levels are:



Technical Development– These are the skills used to play the game, i.e. the “fundamentals”. This includes things like dribbling, passing, shooting, receiving, tackling, juggling, heading, etc.

Along with making sure players have fun, skills is probably the most important area for youth players to focus on.



Tactical Development – Tactics for youth soccer focuses largely on decision making, i.e. how players can make the correct decision given a particular situation. We should try to understand the progression of tactics and develop the players in the proper sequence, so that players are comfortable solving easier problems (1v1, 2v1) before they move on to solve more complex ones (4v4):



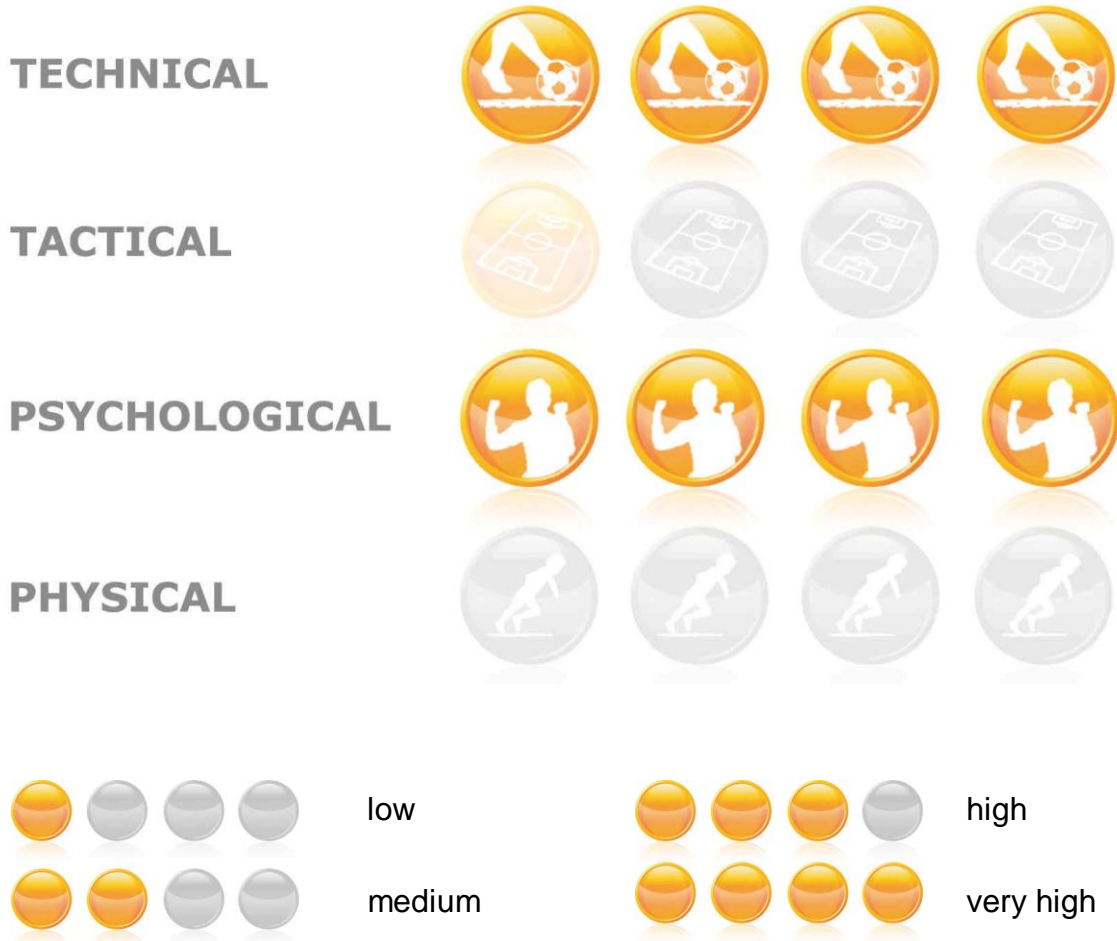
Psychological Development – For youth soccer, this relates to whether the player is having fun playing soccer, and other aspects such as how they deal with winning and losing, their level of motivation, and how they interact with teammates, coaches and their parents.



Physical Development – Fitness for youth soccer players can be largely achieved by just letting them play soccer, although some of the older age groups (U14 and maybe U12) may start incorporating speed and conditioning into practice games and activities.

U6 Player Development Objectives

The following key training priorities are recommended by US Youth Soccer for coaches of U6 players. A focus on helping players develop these skills and very basic tactics is critical as it will serve as the foundation for skills and tactics that will be introduced when these U6 players move on to the next age group. The key focus is an introduction to the basic technical aspect of the game and ensure all the players are having fun.



Over the next few pages we will go into the specific elements within each area that players will be encouraged to learn before entering the next age level.



U6 Technical Skill Priorities

Technical focus at U6 level should be an introduction to all the fundamentals of soccer skills with a specific focus on dribbling.

Field Play - Technical Skills:

Dribble with all sides of both feet (inside, outside, sole)

Dribble out of trouble

Dribble past someone

Changes of direction and turns

Introduction to shielding – Players should develop proper technique to shield the balls from opponents

Introduction to shooting with both feet (with inside of foot and laces)

Introduction to passing with inside and outside of both feet

Players should spend equal time developing both feet – this is very important!!!

U6 Children are physically and maturationally undeveloped and we must remain patient and not try to force them to develop too quickly. Dribbling needs to be the primary focus of our efforts, though passing and shooting should be introduced at this age as well. With all age groups, especially at U6 children, we need to make sure that fun is a central theme in practice. Player development will occur most appropriately and expeditiously if all players are enjoying themselves.

Dribbling is the Technical Focus Area

The most important skill for beginners is dribbling. The ability to dribble the soccer ball is absolutely critical for youth players in the U6 age groups as it is the foundation for all the other basic skills of soccer such as receiving, passing and shooting. When a player is comfortable with the ball at his or her feet, the game becomes easier and more fun.

It takes many years to be a confident dribbler and the process takes a lot of trial and error on the part of the young player. In the beginning, there will be a lot

more failed attempts at dribbling than successes in both practices and games, but be assured that with each attempt to dribble the ball, the player is figuring out what works and what doesn't work. As coaches and parents, we need to be patient with the young players as they learn how to dribble. There will be many times, especially during games, when we will have the urge to yell "kick it" or "boot it" to the player, but we should refrain from this as it will likely send the wrong message and discourage him or her from learning this very important skill and using it in a game-like environment.

We also need to encourage players in this age group to take risks and be creative in their dribbling.



U6 Tactical Skill Priorities

Coaches should not try to teach young players about tactics at this age. This will lead to frustration both for the players and the coach. The focus for U6 players should be learning technique, especially dribbling. Just let them play!!!

No Tactics!!!

For players or teams who are the more advanced end of the technical spectrum, simple introduction to attacking and defending could be introduced. Problem solving and making decisions for themselves are critical tactical elements in young players and simple 1 on 1 drills can help introduce these concepts. Below are some of the tactical skills to focus on at this age-level.

Players could be exposed to these simple tactical scenarios and understand how to both attack and defend these game contexts.

1 v 1 (attacking and defending)

1 v 1 duels could be incorporated into practice sessions to allow all the players to get plenty of opportunities to learn how to dribble past an opponent and how to stop one.



Psychological Development

Psychological focus at U6 level is another major priority. Fostering an environment where our players can grow in confidence, try new things and have fun whilst doing it are critical to developing well rounded players.

Keep it fun and enjoyable!!! This will help foster a desire to play (intrinsic motivation)

Need approval from adults

Need constant positive coaching

Encourage imagination and creativity

The most important aspect of psychological development for young players in the U6 age group is for them to have fun. As a coach, you should strive to create an environment where the players, parents and you, the coach, are all having fun.

Young players are constantly seeking adult approval. As such, positive coaching is critical for this age group. In addition, positive coaching can help build the young player's confidence, which is a very important in their psychological development.

For some experienced U6 players, they could start recognizing the fact that they are part of a team and they begin to associate themselves with their team. This is a great opportunity to start teaching young players about the value of teamwork and what it means to be part of a team (i.e. trusting your teammates, not criticizing them, etc.). Certain fun teambuilding activities can be done during some practices, especially in the beginning of the season when players may not be familiar with each other.



Physical Development

Physical development is not a priority for U6 soccer. Encouraging all players to play and participate and give their best is really all that's required.

Just play soccer

U6 Player Development Overview

At the introductory level of soccer it is crucial that we do not overload our young players with too much information or try to teach them everything we know about soccer. Just as in parenting, it is important to be consistent in coaching and we must make sure that we follow a progressive trend of development for young players. To this end, we need to continue to focus on technique during our practices, as we will in future years. Creating environments in which players get maximum repetitions of technical skills is key.

