

COACHING FOCUS IN PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Marshalltown Area Soccer Club

Gareth Smith, Director of Coaching



The U7 & U8 Player;

At this early age, the primary focus for coaches (facilitators) is to ensure that the activities at practice are based on **HAVING FUN AND KEEPING THE PLAYERS ACTIVELY ENGAGED**. In addition there are the following guidelines:

Technical Focus: Dribbling is still the primary focus at this age, with players having frequent contact with the ball. However, the concept of passing may begin to develop and should be encouraged. Players should be encouraged to control the ball and look for teammates rather than simply kicking the ball forward or to safety. Developing the concept of when to dribble (space) and when to pass (under pressure) begins.

Tactical Focus: Although the children become a little more aware of their surroundings and other players they are still very individually orientated. The coach may offer some simple form of shape (diamond 4v4) but should keep instruction simple and concise. There should be no set positions for players and the player should be allowed to move freely about the field without restrictions.

Physiological Focus: U7/U8 players are still trying to develop various motor skills, patterns and coordination. It is beneficial to incorporate practice activities that develop basic motor skills, with and without the ball, and basic motor patterns, such as jumping, hopping, skipping and running. If available footwork ladders are beneficial in order to develop various types of coordination.

Psychological Focus: it is imperative that players at this, and all ages, come to practices that are fun and provide variety, especially with their short attention spans. This is the cornerstone of successful coaching at this age. There should be little or no emphasis on keeping score and winning.

Game Focus: Small sided games include 1v1 up to and no more than 4v4.