



CLUB LEAGUE COACHING PRIMER

FALL 2007



Greetings coaches!

Thank you for your kindness, dedication, and hard work. You are making a big difference for our program and in the lives of the many kids who are lucky to have your guidance!

Please print or save the information below for future reference.

Urgent: If you haven't done it yet, make sure you call all your players to introduce yourself and to make sure all players know what time they should be at the games, etc. There are a handful of players who have not shown up for many practices. We want to make sure they don't miss any games. And you need to know if any of your players will miss a game.

TEAM MANAGEMENT AND GAME COACHING TIPS

Please refer to the other coaching resources provided (Game Coaching Clinic, Game Coaches Job Description, Methods of Coaching, Reading the Game, etc.) for pointers on how to prepare and conduct yourselves **before**, **during**, and **after** the games.

There is a lot of information to absorb at once. A key skill of the good coach is knowing how to select what information is most pertinent, to **prioritize**.

LEAGUE RULES AND ETIQUETTE

Please make sure you read the league rules and rules of conduct posted on the Club League page on our web site - www.kawvalleysoccer.com

GAME COACHING HIGHLIGHTS AND BASIC PROBLEM-SOLVING

As you know, our training sessions focus on developing technical skills and how to apply them in game situations (= tactics). Our players also get large group tactical training during the practices and scrimmages that are part of each practice. They also learn the game rules, and to develop their intuitions, their insight and ability to read the game. But we cannot cover everything in one season. Development takes time, and it is done gradually. First we teach the fundamental building blocks. Then We put them together into ever more sophisticated tactical and technical execution. You, the game coaches, have a big role to play in this process. You must reinforce and emphasize the training topics covered with your players. If you do not, the lessons might be lost.

Your players will need a lot of guidance on some game basics - rules and basic tactics. They internalize the lessons we teach them only after multiple repetitions. You must understand and accept your role, and be infinitely patient, but devoted to teaching them these points. Soccer is a very simple game - there are only 17 "laws of the game", and the first seven do not even deal with the run of play.

THE 17 LAWS OF THE GAME

1. THE FIELD OF PLAY
2. THE BALL
3. THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS
4. THE PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT
5. THE REFEREE
6. THE ASSISTANT REFEREES
7. THE DURATION OF THE MATCH
8. THE START AND RESTART OF PLAY
9. THE BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY
10. THE METHOD OF SCORING
11. OFFSIDE
12. FOULS AND MISCONDUCT
13. FREE KICKS
14. THE PENALTY KICK
15. THE THROW-IN
16. THE GOAL KICK
17. THE CORNER KICK

A good coach is thoroughly familiar with all these rules, and knows how to communicate them to his players in the simplest way. You can find the FIFA Laws of the Game in the FIFA web site (you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader - a free program that you can download and install if you don't already have it):

<http://fifa.com/en/index.html>

http://fifa.com/fifa/handbook/laws/2004/LOTG2004_e.pdf

The main areas to emphasize will concern rules 8 through 17. Don't hold a graduate seminar on these rules. **DON'T OVERLOAD YOUR PLAYERS WITH INFORMATION, AND DON'T LECTURE THEM. LET THE GAME ITSELF TEACH THEM.** As things come up in the game you can tutor your players, so they learn in small increments, and in the context of the game.

Here are some key areas you will need to address:

- Expect lots of errors on kick-offs, throw-ins, goal-kicks, corner kicks, and free kicks (direct versus indirect kicks).
- Expect players not to understand the referees' calls, or how to proceed after a whistle sounds. Teach them what the referee signals mean.
- Expect players to be disorganized on the field, and to lose their "team shape". Help them regain their shape – after you explain what their shape must be on attack and defense, remind them: "Keep your shape". Tell them specifically (drop back, pinch in, shift right/left, step up, stretch wide, go deep, overlap, etc.)
- Expect players not to understand the offside rule. Constant reminders in simple and clear language, and a quick demonstration before each half generally do the trick. .

Here are some pointers on how you should handle them:

- **KICK-OFFS:** The point of a kick-off is to keep possession of the ball. Players must not kick the ball forward, giving it away to the other team. This is not American football... Two players should kick off. They should stand three feet apart, facing

each other. One player should rest his toes on the ball. At the whistle, he should roll the ball gently to the other player, slightly into the attacking half. From there they should either pass back (since the defenders will be charging them immediately), or pass outside, or dribble outside.

- **THROW-INS:** Both feet must remain on the ground until the ball is released, and the ball must go behind and over the head for a proper throw-in. Violation of either of these conditions will result in the throw-in being retaken by the other team. Receiving players should not be too close to the ball, and should provide at least three options for the thrower: to the right, to the left, and in the middle (use the slogan "right-left-middle").
- **GOAL KICKS:** Prior to each game you must choose a player who has a good strong kick to take goal kicks. Don't allow any players to do it who are not capable yet (most young players lack the leg strength). Assign someone to do it ahead of time. The main mistake on goal-kicks is to kick balls on the ground right in front of the goal. The kick must be high, long, and wide. Receiving players should make every effort to win the ball. The defenders must "stay home" - one in front of each goal post, and one in between. The ball cannot be played until it has passed outside the penalty area (or the goal kick must be retaken). Your midfielders should be positioned to the right and to the left (wide), standing on the sideline and facing inward, in order to receive the goal kick.
- **CORNER KICKS:** Corner kicks should be placed in between the two goal posts, away from the goalkeeper's reach (about 5 or 6 yards back from the goal line). Attacking players should start at the edge of the penalty box and "crash in" toward the goal to receive the corner kick with a forward motion. Defending players should be positioned at each post, and also 5 yards in front of each post, as well as five yards from the center of the goal. They should defend their zones, and not allow any shots on goal.
- **FREE KICKS:** Depending on what the infraction was, a free kick can be direct or indirect. You can score a goal directly on a direct free kick. On an indirect free kick you must have one other player touch the ball before a goal can be scored. Referees signal when a kick is indirect by raising one arm straight up (vertically) until the kick is taken. Attacking players should shoot directly when the kick is direct and they are within shooting range. Test the goalkeeper! His team mates should "crash the goal" to win any rebounds ("second ball"). Defending players should form a "wall" to cover the near half of the goal, with the remaining players marking man-to-man. Defending players should push the offside line as far away from their goal as feasible (even with the "wall"). No wall is necessary if the ball is not within shooting range. Fewer players are needed if the free kick is taken from a very acute angle. The more central the free kick, the more players will be needed on the wall (no more than three players for U10 teams, four for U12 teams, and five for U14 teams). On indirect free kicks the player taking it should set up a team mate for a shot. His team mate should shoot on goal, since his is the second touch. On indirect free kicks defenders should be ready to "crash the ball" to deny a shot on the second touch.
- **READING THE REFEREES AND QUICK RESTARTS:** Referees are instructed to be on "teaching mode" when they make certain calls. Teach your players what the referee signs mean. Teach them to read the game so they know how to restart the play, and to make quick decisions. A quick restart can catch the defending team out of shape. On the other hand, defending teams should quickly get into the correct defending shape so they are not caught by the other team with a quick restart. Your players must learn to read the referees and react quickly.

- **TEAM SHAPE:** Team shape refers to the way your players are arranged on the field at any given time. There are four basic "moments" in a soccer game, each requiring a slightly different awareness of team shape:
 - **Defensive Shape:** Your opponents have the ball. Your outside defenders should "pinch in" toward the middle and your midfielders should drop back to maintain a compact team shape. Your forward should pressure your opponent's defenders when they have the ball.
 - **Attacking Shape:** Your defenders should push forward just past the midfield line in order to support the attackers, switch the ball to the weak side, or even shoot from the back. Your outside midfielders should stay wide, "square" with the central midfielder, trying to penetrate on the outside lanes if possible. Your central midfielder should stay central, in the "pocket" between the forward and the defenders, so he can win any "second balls" coming back, and combine with all other players, providing a link between all players. Your forward should make diagonal and curved runs ahead of the ball, always in a position to receive a pass, and most of the time with his back to the goal he is attacking, receiving the ball first before turning to face the goal. He must not always take on the defenders, but rather combine with the rest of his team mates.
 - **Defensive Transition Shape:** Immediately after your team loses the ball. Whoever is closest to the attacker with the ball should "pressure the ball" in order to delay the attack, prevent a quick counter, and prevent shots on goal. This gives his team mates more time to get organized. His team mates meanwhile should sprint back and get into the proper compact defensive team shape.
 - **Attacking Transition Shape:** Immediately after winning the ball. The player who wins the ball should dribble it to space, preferably outside, or pass it if possible; the other defenders should "stay home" until it is safe to push forward, the forward and midfielders should move outward and forward, providing passing options. After taking the ball outside, the Caution: the defending team should not take any risks right in front of the goal, however. If under pressure right in front of the goal, it is safer to "clear out" the ball, kicking it long, high and wide. Better safe than sorry.
- **SYSTEM OF PLAY:**
 - System of play refers to the starting positional assignments. A system of play is a general organizing principle, not a rigid rule. During the course of play your players will make many runs and respond to the demands and opportunities that the game gives them. This fluidity and flexibility is important. But with young players it is equally important that they constantly strive to regain their team shape, as described above in the section on team shape.
 - The system of play will depend on the number of players on the field for your age group. U10s will play 6v6, U12s will play 8v8, and U14s will play 11v11. These numbers include the goalkeeper. Here are the recommended systems of play for each age group (a good balance between defensive and offensive priorities):
 - **U10:** 3-2 system (three defenders, two attackers; the goalkeepers goes without saying...)
 - **U12:** 3-3-1 system (three defenders, three midfielders, and one forward; the goalkeeper goes without saying).

- **U14:** 4-4-2 system (four defenders, four midfielders, and two forwards).
- **OFFSIDE RULE:** Below I will paste the offside rule as it is in the FIFA Laws Of The Game. Then I will make a few comments to help you teach your players.

LAW 11 – OFFSIDE

Offside Position It is not an offence in itself to be in an offside position. A player is in an offside position if:• he is nearer to his opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent. A player is not in an offside position if:• he is in his own half of the field of play; or• he is level with the second last opponent; or• he is level with the last two opponents.

Offence A player in an offside position is only penalized if, at the moment the ball touches or is played by one of his team, he is, in the opinion of the referee, involved in active play by:• interfering with play; or• interfering with an opponent; or• gaining an advantage by being in that position.

No Offence There is no offside offence if a player receives the ball directly from:• a goal kick; or• a throw-in; or• a corner kick. **Infringements/Sanctions** For any offside offence, the referee awards an indirect free kick to the opposing team to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred. * (see page 3)

- Observations on key points about the offside rule:
 - You will not be called offside if you are in an offside position but are not part of the play. You will not be called offside when in an offside position but receiving the ball from a throw-in. You cannot be offside if you are in your own field.
 - The offside line is the next-to-last defender, or the ball itself, whichever is farther up the field.
 - A player will not be called offside when she receives the ball in an offside position, if at the moment the passer kicked the ball to her she was still onside. In other words, after the pass is struck, a player may run forward to receive the ball, even if she receives it behind the next-to-last defender.
 - Please check the Laws of the Game on the FIFA web site for illustrations of the offside rule. It will help you acquire an intuitive understanding of the rule. The link to the FIFA web site was listed above.

TEAM WARM-UP BEFORE THE GAME

The team warm-up should focus on preparing players to meet the demands of the game. There are physical, technical, tactical, and mental demands. Your warm-up should reproduce the demands of the game. Shooting on goal with a stationary ball does not happen during the game (except in a rare penalty kick). It is counterproductive for your players to shoot stationary balls. Here are some do's and don'ts of team warm-ups before the game:

- DO'S:
 - Warm up by progressively increasing the work-rate. Start easy, end strong. Don't overwork them, but by game time they must be playing at game speed.
 - Stretch appropriately early in the warm-up.
 - Include dribbling, passing, receiving, little shooting, and make sure your goalkeepers also get attention.
 - Every player must get lots of touches on the ball. No lines.
 - Keep-away games (5v2 for more advanced players, or 3v1 for the youngest) are excellent warm-ups. Make sure they are restricted to a certain area - not too small, not too big.

- DON'TS:
 - Make sure all balls are aired up properly. No flat or soft balls.
 - No shooting with stationary balls.
 - No excessive running without the ball. The point is for players to get lots of touches on the ball.
 - No lines. The point is for every player to get lots of touches on the ball.
 - No warm-ups in the goal mouth. We need to preserve the quality of the grass.

There are many ways of meeting these conditions. Here is a sample warm-up routine that you can use. Feel free to modify it to meet your needs:

- Around 45 minutes prior to kick off, I encourage the players to start off with an easy run. This can be done as a team or individually and would entail jogging back and forth from sideline to sideline varying between forward running, backward running, skipping, side shuffling, and carioca. 2 minutes.
- Next I have the players stretch for a 2-minute period (they typically want to stretch for a longer period of time but that will only slow them down doing extended static stretching so it's limited to two minutes).
- Next they do similar runs as before but now doing things such as knees up running, heels to butt running, skipping while having the arms go in a circular motion etc. 2 minutes.
- Again this is followed by a 2-minute stretch.
- After this two-minute stretch the players go on another run. This time it's jog 5 steps then sprint 5 steps then jog 10 steps and sprint 10 steps then back to the 5 step jog and sprint. 2 minutes.
- This is done for 1 minute and then a final 1-minute stretch.
- Next the players get in a 40 x 40 area (if available) and start jogging around. There are 4 balls (assuming 15 players) and the players with the ball pass to another player and then sprint 5 steps before continuing on their jog. This is done to work on passing, receiving, sprinting after the pass, vision and communication.
- Next the players get a drink and then break into 2 teams and scrimmage to small goals (side line to side line if available). The theory here is the best way to prepare for a competitive game of soccer is to play soccer. This game only needs to be played for around 6-8 minutes at which point the players break into groups for functional warm ups (backs play long balls to each other while forwards and midfielders do some shooting - on the dribble).
- The last 5-10 minutes of this warm up should be low key with the players doing what they need to do to prepare for the game.

Good luck coaches, and thanks again for all your help!

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