

U-06 Coaches Handbook

Los Alamos Youth Soccer League

*Adopted by the LAYSL Board of Directors
2000-2001 Season*

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I. Introduction/Background

The Los Alamos Youth Soccer League (LAYSL) Board would like to thank you for volunteering to coach this important age group. Coaches of U-06 LAYSL teams are expected to take the Youth Module I training supplied by the New Mexico Youth Soccer Association (NMYSA), our parent organization. This handbook cannot replace the Youth Module I training. The Youth Module is critical to ensure a positive and developmentally appropriate soccer experience for players of this age. Training courses will be scheduled periodically by the LAYSL Training Coordinator, and you are strongly encouraged to take this course (it may soon be mandatory).

At this age, the soccer experience can be a fun and exciting one, which will forever stimulate the child's interest in soccer. The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with the mechanism to organize activities and games that will allow all the players to learn some basic soccer skills and, most of all, have FUN.

Children under six years old present significant challenges because of their immaturity, short attention span, and their differing physical development and coordination levels. You, as the coach, will need to deal with a wide variety of physical size, abilities, and personalities. The goal at this age is to introduce the children to basic concepts like dribbling and kicking while making it FUN. Play games to cause them to learn skills, minimize lecturing, and maximize touches on the ball.

There has typically been no mechanism to pass on knowledge to U-06 coaches and the U-06 coach is often the most inexperienced. The long-term success of LAYSL depends upon what we do with the younger age groups. Towards this end this handbook will be updated each year with input from all U-06 coaches.

II. Team Management/Involving Parents

A team parent meeting at the beginning of each season is important in providing parents with your approach (philosophy for coaching U-06) and expectations. Make sure parents understand what you are trying to accomplish and how you will be going to go about it. Parents also need to know what to bring to practice (*e.g.*, filled water bottle, sock-covered shin guards, no jewelry, etc.). Discussing practice times and expectations for picking children up on time is also important.

It is imperative at this meeting that you as a coach get parents involved. This involvement will dramatically help you, but also children at this age really need parental encouragement and involvement. Parents are the most significant people in the 5- and 6-year-old's life. Appointing a team parent or parents is a necessity. Team parents are most useful in helping to control children and ensure that none wonder from the practice area. Team parents are also helpful in communicating scheduling changes and cancellations.

III. Risk Management

The LAYSL Board has adopted a set of guidelines to help reduce some of the risks associated with youth soccer. All coaches and parents should read and be familiar with these guidelines. Furthermore, it is very important that parents understand that there are inherent risks of injury in playing youth soccer. In addition to the risk management guidelines, with this age group, you as the coach must:

- A. Ensure a safe playing area with appropriate equipment; you have a duty to notice hazards and to do what you can to reduce risks.
 - 1. Ensure players wear shin guards (under socks) and remove all jewelry
 - 2. Note and remedy any dangerous conditions (*e.g.*, holes, sprinklers, goals); notify the LAYSL Fields Coordinator of any serious field problems
 - 3. Provide clear practice rules to avoid injury
 - 4. Call attention to all risks no matter how obvious
 - 5. Closely monitor weather conditions (*e.g.*, lightning) and assure proper clothing and contingency plans
 - 6. Do not allow children to climb on goals or other structures
 - 7. Ensure any splint / cast is properly padded
- B. Properly plan activities and teach age-appropriate skills
 - 1. Repeatedly warn players of dangerous risks and techniques
 - 2. Immediately stop reckless or overly aggressive behavior
 - 3. Develop a written practice plan
 - 4. Supervise the activity closely
 - 5. Provide proper instruction
 - 6. Provide frequent water breaks
- C. Determine limits of a player's ability to participate
 - 1. Adapt your practice plans to individual needs
 - 2. Solicit parental assistance
- D. Match size and physical ability of your players
 - 1. Modify practice when mismatches occur
 - 2. Know your players and their ability and coach accordingly
- E. Prohibit heading the ball and slide tackling
- F. Provide appropriate emergency assistance
 - 1. Consider having a cellular phone available
 - 2. Know and provide proper first aid

IV. Characteristics of U-06 Players

- Short attention span
- Different players will possess a wide variety of sizes, abilities, and physical coordination
- Can attend to only one problem at a time
- May understand rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated
- May or may not remember or understand what lines or out-of-bounds mean, what team they are on, what goal they are going for, or what positions are for—coaches and parents must be patient and laugh with them when they get “lost” on the field
- Easily bruised psychologically—praise often and give hints; do not criticize
- Need generous praise
- Need to play without pressure
- No awards for winning, just for participating
- Very individually oriented
- No sense of pace—they go “all out” constantly; they are easily fatigued but recover rapidly
- Development for boys and girls are quite similar
- Physical coordination limited

V. Practice Organization

- Practices should consist of age-appropriate FUN games and activities that encourage participation. Try to incorporate skill development into soccer-related games.
- The coach must be a facilitator, a friendly helper, an organizer, and a stimulator, while being patient, enthusiastic, and imaginative.
- Practices should be no more than 60 minutes twice a week for this age group and organized in a progressive manner, *i.e.*, warm up, then individual activities, then group activities.
- Gear sessions around touching the ball as many times as possible. Involve the ball in as many activities as possible.
- Basic movements such as running, skipping, and hopping should be emphasized.
- Keep things moving quickly and use activities that avoid lines.
- Have as many activities ready as possible in one hour. Emphasis needs to be on what is FUN.
- Participate in all warm-ups and activities. Have the kids hold a ball for the stretches to increase fun and familiarization with the ball.
- Exaggerate your motions to illustrate a technique or proper procedure.
- Each practice should be used to teach one technique or skill, *e.g.*, shooting (kicking), passing, or dribbling. For example, a single practice should consist entirely of age-appropriate exercises and games to teach just dribbling, while a different practice would concentrate on just passing.
- Plan at least four 90-second water breaks.
- Practices should always end on a FUN high note, so that the children do not want to stop and look forward to the next practice. Handing out a treat to each child at the end of practice with words of encouragement is always a nice way to end.

Example Practice Schedule

Practice 1—Theme: Dribbling

- (1) Warm up—1 ball per player.
- (2) Stretch upward with ball over head, reach for the sky with the ball.
- (3) Stretch side-to-side with the ball over head.
- (4) Roll ball between legs in a figure eight; reach with ball back between legs.
- (5) Touch-Touches (pass the ball from inside of the left foot to inside of the right foot, repeat from side to side), count out loud until 10 or 20.
- (6) Tap-Taps or Hat Dance (lightly touch ball with the bottom of right foot then with left repetitively, ball should remain stationary); count out loud until 10 or 20.
- (7) Dribble 10 yards and return using inside and outside of foot.
- (8) Break (water); set up cones for next set.
- (9) Around the World (1 ball per player). Set four or five cones in a large area. Assign each cone a country name. Players dribble inside the designated area; on command they must dribble around the country you name. After some time, name several countries at one time.
- (10) Sharks and Minnows or Freeze Monster (1 ball per player). Set cones in a large area (circle or square). Players dribble within the area keeping the ball close, using the inside and outside of their foot, and avoiding other players. After a few minutes the coach and one or two additional adults become the sharks and try to make the minnows change direction while dribbling. Freeze monster is the same approach, but player freezes when touched by the monster until all players are frozen.
- (11) Break (water); set up cones for next set.
- (12) Red Light Green Light. Children's game, but with soccer balls. Players need to start and stop on command and control the ball. Stress dribbling technique.
- (13) Break; set up cones for next set.
- (14) 3v3 game stressing dribbling (1 ball). Set up small field with small goals with cones. Two points for dribbling through the goal and one point for shooting through the goal.

VI. Games/Scrimmages

- Play lots of small-sided games
- 3v3 is the ideal size for this age group
- Coach or coaches should be on the field at all times
- This age is too young to expect any teamwork
- USYSA mandates no keepers at this age group
- Remember the objective--HAVE FUN!!!

3 v 3 Playing Rules

The Field

- *Dimensions:* The field of play shall be rectangular, its length not more than 30 yards or less than 20 yards and its width not more than 20 yards and not less than 15 yards. The length in all cases shall exceed the width. USYSA recommendation is 25x20 yards.
- *Markings:* End and touch lines marked with cones
- A halfway line across the field
- A center circle (3-yard radius)
- No goal area
- *Goals:* small size, e.g. 4x6

The Ball

- A size-3 ball is used.

The Players

- Maximum on field at one time 3
- *Playing time:* Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time
- Teams and games may be coed

The Equipment

- Conform to FIFA (*exception:* footwear may be tennis shoes or soft-cleated shoes)

The Referee

- Coach on the field controlling play
- Any infraction shall be briefly explained

Duration of the Game

- Four equal 8-minute quarters
- 2-minute break between quarters
- 5-minute halftime break

Start of Play

- Conform to FIFA (*exception:* opponent must be 3 yards from center mark while kick-off is in progress)

Ball In and Out of Play, Scoring, Fouls

- Conform to FIFA

Free Kicks

- Conform to FIFA (*exception:* opponent must be 3 yards away before kick allowed)

Penalty Kicks

- Not allowed

Throw-In or Kick-In

- Kick-in considered as an indirect kick with opponent 3 yards away
- If throw-in is used a second throw must be allowed if the player commits a foul on the initial attempt. The referee/coach shall explain the proper method before the rethrow.

Goal Kick

- Conform to FIFA (*exception:* opponent must be 3 yards back)

Corner Kick

- No corner kicks; throw-in or kick-in will be taken in place of the corner kick

USYSA Recommendations

- Opposing coaches and players should shake hands after game or scrimmage
- Participation awards for ALL
- Parent, coaches, non-playing players, and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters

VII. DOs and DON'Ts for Parents and Coaches

DOs

- DO stress having FUN
- DO offer suggestions and advice
- DO offer considerable praise and encouragement
- DO award participation
- DO involve parents
- DO use the 3 C's when providing instructions—clear, concise, and correct

DON'Ts

- DON'T shout negative comments to any child
- DON'T award winning
- DON'T shout instructions at the player with the ball; he/she has enough to worry about
- DON'T shout instructions like send it, boot it, or kick it—allow the child to practice good decision making and ball control
- DON'T get upset if they don't pass; let them dribble
- DON'T place one player directly in front of the goal during a scrimmage or game—this defeats the purpose of small-sided games
- DON'T use the 3 L's—lines, laps, and lectures

VIII. Age-appropriate GAMES

Run and Shoot

Line near the center of the field facing goal; use two lines and two goals to keep time in lines to a minimum. Have a player from one line start to move towards the net and feed the player the ball. The player dribbles toward the net and shoots. Move quickly through the line. Get parents help to collect balls and keep kids moving through the lines.

Monkey in the Middle

All players form a circle and choose a Monkey to be in the center. The players forming the circle pass one ball among them while the person in the center tries to gain control of the ball. When this happens, the person in the circle who last touched the ball goes to the center.

Cone Soccer

Play 1v1 with one player against one player; each has a cone as a goal. Match skill and size. Every player is involved; no one stands and watches. This promotes a lot of dribbling and switching match-ups assures no one being outmatched.

Ice Monster

Mark of area (circle or square) and let the coach be the “Monster.” Players with balls dribble within the area. The “Monster” attempts to touch players, who “freeze” when touched. Player is also frozen if ball goes outside the area. Players can become “unfrozen” when touched by an “unfrozen” player.

Numbers

1v1 dribbling skills. Divide players into two groups given each player in each group a number. Attempt to match size and skill for the same numbers. Make two very wide goals with cones. Players spread across each goal line. Call out one (or more) numbers and players play 1v1 or 2v2 with the remaining players defending the goal along the goal line. Coach throws out the ball and play continues until ball goes out of play or one team scores.

Red Light Green Light

Players line up with balls and dribble on green light instruction by coach. Players must stop on red light with control of the ball. Play continues until players pass the coach.

Cops and Robbers

Have players line up with balls. These are the robbers. Two more players are the cops and face the robbers near the middle of the field. Robbers attempt to dribble to the other side with the cops attempting to take the ball away. If the robber loses the ball, the player goes to jail until only two robbers remain. These two robbers become the cops for the next game.

Camp Town Races

Players line up on one end of the field with balls. At signal they take off dribbling to the goal and shoot on the goal. Players retrieve ball from the goal and dribble to the starting end, shooting into the goal. The first to finish is the winner.

Pirate

Like Sharks and Minnows, but with one “Pirate.”

Kickout

Everyone dribbles ball within a circle or square while trying to kick the other player’ ball out. Player must protect own ball, working on shielding and control. Player cannot kick another ball out unless their ball is in the area.

Egg Hunt

Players line up on line and coach scatters balls (eggs) around the field. The goal serves as the basket at the opposite end of the field. The object of the game is to get the eggs in the basket as quickly as possible.

Marbles

Every player has a ball with two groups at opposite ends. Place an unusual color ball in the middle (as the marble). Players try to move the marble to the other teams side by striking the marble with the ball. After the game starts, players can use any ball.

2v1, 3v2

Uneven number games encourage team play and passing.

Keep Your Yard Clean

Create a neutral area between the two teams on the field where no player is allowed (1 or 2 yards). Each player starts with a ball at their feet. On command, each team tries to keep their side of the game free of balls by kicking their balls to the other teams side. After some amount of time, stop the game and count balls. Variations include 1) using only player’s left foot, 2) dribble the ball around a cone in their side then kick, and 3) throw the ball to the other side.

Gates

A gate consists of two cones spaced 2 steps apart. Two players per gate and one ball per group. The first player must play the ball on the ground through the gate to the second player. Second player must receive the ball and play back through the gate within two touches. The game can continue until the ball does not go through the gate or for a time limit with score keeping.

Dribbling Fitness

Four teams at each corner of a square with balls in the middle. The object is to get the four balls back to your team’s corner. Only one ball can be moved at a time and the ball must be dribbled back to the corner. For the younger players the ball can be carried to the corner initially.

3v3 with Multiple Balls

Set up a 3v3 game with goals. Have coaches and parent quickly return balls into play when kicked out. Also try using 2 or 3 balls during the game.

Two-sided Goals

A 2v2 game played with the goal as two cones. Players can score on the goal from either side. The game is continuous and is best played for 2 to 3 minutes.

Sit Down

An even-sided keepaway game. When a player loses possession he/she sits down until their team regains possession of the ball. In this manner the controlling team always has a one-player advantage. Make three consecutive passes equal to a goal.

Running Bases

Set up a square playing area with the corner areas being the base. Players attempt to dribble their ball from base to base without being tagged. If they get tagged, they exchange places with the tagger. Players are save in any of the four base areas. Only one player is allowed in a base at a time. If a new player enters a base, the old player must leave.

Protect the Cone

Define a square space with four teams and each team defending three cones on one side of the space. All players have a ball. Players either attack the opponent's cones while controlling their own ball, or defend their team's cones while controlling their own ball. The cones must be knocked down with the ball. Teams must stop attacking when their cones are all down.