

## U5 Coaches VSA Handbook

First of all, let me say THANK YOU for volunteering to coach in the Valley Soccer Association! Without volunteers like you who are actually willing to get up and help us, we wouldn't be able to offer a soccer program for all the kids in the Valley. Secondly, let me reassure you that you have done the most difficult part, by stepping up and volunteering. This handbook is designed to help you with the rest of the job, in order to make your season as easy, stress-free, and enjoyable as possible.

If at anytime you have an questions, problems, issues, or stress, please don't hesitate to reach out to your Technical Team:

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### In this handbook:

~You will find age appropriate session plans, drills, activities, and games that you can build your season's practice plans around. You will even find a complete generic Season Plan that you can simply follow step-by-step, week-by-week, in order to take all the pressure off of you and ensure your players are developing appropriately throughout the season.

~You will find age appropriate Player Expectations and Objectives that will help you easily and conveniently develop your players and your team. These will be science-based recommendations that you can choose to implement based on your assessments.

~You will find some all encompassing coaching tips and pointers that will help you deliver the best season ever to your players.

Now, before we begin, here are some key thoughts and terms that are used by coaches to help them plan and organize their players, teams, and seasons to get the most development out of their allotted time.

### Overview of periodization terms:

Periodization: Division of the training year or training time into periods to meet these training Objectives.

Macrocycle: For a yearly training plan, the macrocycle is 1 year. In a seasonal plan, the macrocycle is 1 season.

Microcycle: A week of training (7 days)

Mesocycle: A series of microcycles linked together by a training theme. Phases are mesocycles.

Period: Divisions of a seasonal plan into training themes. The periods of a sport program are preparation, competition and transition.

## 2. Coaching Philosophy and Player Development Philosophy in the VSA

The Valley Soccer Association uses a Player-centric Developmental Philosophy in line with the Canadian Soccer Association's recommended Long Term Player Development (LTPD) model, rather than a Results-based Philosophy. The following policies and procedures are designed to promote compliance with LTPD Philosophy.

## **Responsibility for Implementation**

Implementation of the LTPD philosophy is the responsibility of the Technical Director, Head Coaches, coordinators, other team coaches, and parents. All individuals that interact with the players have a role in ensuring the club philosophy is carried out.

### **General**

- We follow the recommendations of LTPD
- Mistake-based learning is an essential part of player development.
- Tournament play and travel is limited according to age group and carefully monitored to ensure that best practices are followed in any competitions in which our players participate.
- Parents are expected to focus on and praise development rather than results. Players
- Individual ball possession is a fundamental requirement for any successful player.
- A possession-based game is at the heart of player development.
- The emphasis is on individual development rather than team-building.
- Players are developed as much as possible in single year age groups.
- Pre-pubescent, and players going through puberty are exposed mainly to technical training.
- Players experiencing a growth spurt are carefully monitored and load is adjusted appropriately.
- Players who have not yet reached their potential are worked with, and not discarded in favour of younger players who may be more skilled.
- Players who periodically play in older age groups are monitored and do so under the guidance of the Director of Coaching and Player Development.
- Players need permission from the Director of Coaching and Player Development to play for other teams/clubs.
- The principles of youth periodization are followed, meaning that players must get sufficient rest periods and breaks from the game.

### **Coaches**

- Team tactics are introduced gradually and only after fundamental technique is mastered.
- Coaches are expected to follow our training curricula and to support its philosophy.
- Coach development takes the form of age group specialization. Where practical, coaches remain with one age group, rather than moving with players.

## **Becoming a U5 Coach in the VSA**

This is considered Stage 1, Active Start, and is a crucial time for the children to develop Physical Literacy and a joy of exercise, as well as a love for soccer.

### **Stage 1: Active Start**

- Aim: At this level, the objective is to get the children moving, to keep them active, and learn all fundamental movement skills using a well structured, positive and fun approach.
  - Technical: The player and the ball: running with the ball, dribbling, controlling, kicking and shooting.
  - Physical: General overall development and mobility. Running, jumping and throwing. • Tactical: None
- U4-U6, Female and Male
- Mental: Fun, fascination and passion for play. Positive attitude to sport. Confidence, concentration and enjoyment of the game.
  - Tactical: Implement basic attack and defense principles.

## **Session Structure**

In the Valley Soccer Association, we highly encourage all coaches to follow the Session Planning structures as set out by SSA and CSA. There are two acceptable names for this theory: either Whole Part Whole, or WGAG (Warm-up, Game, Activity, Game).

Whole Part Whole follows the idea of having a good warm-up, and then a Whole Game with Provisions, followed by a strategically chosen Activity, and then each practice ends with a Whole Game without provisions, just a regular soccer game. This means that some rules of the first Whole Game are slightly different than a normal game. For example, maybe your players can only touch the ball two times each, or maybe they must touch the ball five times each before passing or shooting; or maybe you split the field into zones and make rules about who can go where. Perhaps you have three teams with goals instead of two, the options are limitless. As a coach you must decide what your group of players would benefit from the most, and you then come up with a plan to address that. Then an organized Activity is chosen to address the specific thoughts of the Coach for the needs of that team.

After that, the team enjoys a fun Whole Game without any special rules, stoppages, or provisions; just a good scrimmage. An important part of every session, whether it be for training or a game, is a mindful Debrief, or Cool Down. This is your chance to address the team after the session and reflect on what you did during your session. What you liked as coach, what the players liked, and what the players would have liked to see changed for next time. This isn't your time for criticism or "hard coaching" or things like that. This is the time to tell them what you liked and then give them the opportunity to tell you their thoughts.

Length of Practice/Play/Training Sessions.

U5: 45 minutes

U7-11: 60 minutes

U13+: 90 minutes.

## **Overview and General Advice**

Coaching U5 is a sometimes daunting task, but can be rewarding and as much fun as any other group, if not more. There are several key considerations and reminders to keep in your toolbox for your season.

1. The fun, safety, and comfort of the players is the most important thing to remember. Tactics and skill development are a very distant priority.
2. Short Sessions, keep them under an hour per session, one session per week.
3. Ball Centered, every player must have a ball at their feet at almost all times.
4. Fun Games, Easy Drills, and a general low stress environment is the goal.
5. It's best to be super flexible and ready to adapt your plan rather than having a very rigid and strict practice plan that must be followed to the letter. If the kids are loving the game of Sharks and Minnows, play multiple rounds and forget about another plan you had.

### **Some Popular Games and Drills that your Players will Love:**

Sharks and Minnows.

What Time is it Mr/Mrs Wolf?

Nest Robber.

Freeze Tag.

Simon Says.

Relay Races.

In most of the other age groups, I will be including full practice plans for the entirety of the season broken down from one nice week Macro Cycle (season) into 3 Meso Cycles (Parts) of 3 one-week Micro cycles each. However, in U5 there aren't really any of those things to worry about. Just show up, set up some games and drills, and make sure the kids have fun in a safe and a comfortable environment.

Good luck, have fun, and thank you again.