

MUYSA

U7 SOCCER PROGRAM

FALL 2007/  
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## Introduction

This handbook is geared towards coaches of U7 (1<sup>st</sup> grade) players – i.e. the players in MUYSA’s In-Town program. Its aim is to provide coaches of this age group with the following:

- What to expect in terms of player behavior.
- How to teach soccer techniques.
- Basic techniques to teach at this age.
- A weekly practice curriculum which includes drills and exercises to use during practices.

## Players – U7 Age Group (1<sup>st</sup> grade)

### Characteristics

- Attention span is a bit longer than the U-6 players but still not at a “competitive” stage.
- Inclined towards small group activities.
- Always in motion: scratching, blinking, jerking, rocking ...
- Easily bruised psychologically. They will remember negative comments for a long time. Shout praise. Give “hints”.
- They want everybody to like them.
- Developing physical confidence. Most are able to ride a two-wheeler.
- Starting to imitate older players or sports heroes. Want the same “gear” as them.
- Lack sense of pace. They go flat out until they drop.
- Skeletal system growing rapidly. Often results in apparent lack of coordination.
- Cardiovascular and temperature regulation system is not developed. Their heart rate peaks quickly and they overheat quickly. Make sure they get adequate water breaks.
- Limited understanding with personal evaluation. “If they try hard, they performed well” regardless of the actual performance. They need to be encouraged constantly, and asked “Now, can you do this?”
- Better at recognizing when the ball is out of play and remembering what goal they are going for...but in the heat of battle, they will sometimes forget. They still find it difficult to be really aware of more than one thing at a time.

### Things You Can Expect

7 year-old players are a bit more compliant than their U6 counterparts. They will be able to follow 2 or 3 step instructions and are starting to have a good understanding about what it means to play a “game”. They are also starting to cooperate more with their teammates. In fact, they now will recognize that they even have teammates by the fact that they occasionally, and I mean occasionally, will pass the ball to a teammate on purpose. Often, they will repeat the phrase “I can’t do that!”, but, will quickly run to show you that they can, even when they only think they can. Some other things that you can expect to happen during a season with this age group.

- There will be at least 200-300 falls during the season, but, they will usually pick themselves back up.
- The puddle in front of the goal is still too tempting to resist.
- Keep a spare pump in you bag as the players usually do not realize that their ball is flat until they try to kick it, or the coach tells them that it is flat.
- Some of the girls are a lot tougher than the boys.
- They will still want to wear a pinnie, even when the color is identical to their shirt.
- It will be impossible to remember who are best friends as you make up teams.
- They will wear their uniform to bed.

## Coaching Rationale

Some of the players that are playing as a 7 year old, have had one to two years of soccer experience and thus have already touched the ball a few thousand times in their lives. This, however, does not mean that these players are ready for the mental demands of tactical team soccer. True, they do have some idea of the game, but the emphasis still needs to be placed on the individual's ability to control the ball with his/her body. They are still there to have fun, and because some of the players may be brand new to the sport, it is imperative that activities are geared towards individual success and participation. Following are some more items that a coach of U-7 players should consider.

- Small-sided soccer is the best option for these players. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but, it is an easier game to understand.
- Because of rapid growth spurts during this age, players will go through times when they seem to have lost control of their body. What they could easily do 2 weeks ago now seems unattainable. Be patient.
- *Passing is not an important part of their game, no matter how much anybody yells at them to do otherwise, it is much more fun to dribble and shoot. Let them.*
- Learning how to control the ball should be the main objective at this age. The kids need to touch it as many times as possible during fun activities that will engage them.
- Challenge them to get better by practicing on their own. There is no rule which states that they can't learn by themselves, no matter how important we think we are.
- Incidental things are important. They are forming the habits that will impact their future participation.
- Ask them to take care of their equipment (water bottle included), cooperate, listen, behave, and try hard. Realize, however, that they often forget and will need to be reminded often.
- Ask them to work with others to solve a particular challenge. Start them with just one partner and work from there.

## Teaching Soccer Techniques

Soccer players do not automatically know how to execute the various techniques (skills) associated with the game. Even after learning the basic skills, players need instruction on how and when to use the techniques they have learned in a game situation.

### Fundamentals

Our job as coaches is to teach our players the basic techniques and give them the knowledge of the game and confidence in themselves that will help them reach their full potential as soccer players. Here are some tips to help you teach the fundamentals to your players:

- Explain the importance of the technique ... keep it short, keep it simple. The players are more apt to learn if you tell them how and when the technique fits into a game setting.
- Give 3 or 4 key points to help the players perform the technique.
- Demonstrate the technique. If you are unable to do it, ask one of your better players to do it for you.
- Organize the team into small groups. The smaller the better, depending upon the technique and the amount of help you have.
- Practice the technique. Observe the players trying to do the technique.
- Make corrections as necessary. Be POSITIVE and try to point out when the technique is being done well; however, you must correct technique that is being done wrong. You can do this without directing your corrections at any particular player. If none of your players can perform the technique, you need to reconsider whether it is appropriate for their age and experience level.
- Practice under match conditions. In order to tell if the players can do the technique in a game situation, increase the difficulty by adding a defender, making their space smaller, or by speeding up the pace of the activity. Small-sided games work well to show whether a technique has been learned.

## Using Progressions

The basic idea in teaching soccer techniques is to start simple and increase the level of difficulty.

- Start with the simplest elements of the technique. Let the players learn initially without any pressure.
- Gradually add more elements of the skill.
- Gradually increase the difficulty level of the activity. Increase difficulty (pressure) by:
  - Increasing the number of players executing the skill in a limited area.
  - Reducing the space available for executing the drill.
  - Specifying the direction the player must move.
  - Adding a passive defender ("shadow defense").
  - Adding an active defender.
- Perform the skill in the way it would be used in a game.

## Age Appropriate Skills and Techniques

### Skills - U7

#### Key Technical Skills to be Mastered

- Shooting with the top of the foot or "laces", using either foot.
- Inside of foot dribbling, using either foot.
- Outside of foot dribbling using either foot.
- Dribbling for speed, keeping the ball as close to the foot as possible
- Inside of foot pass, up to 10 yards, using either foot.
- Controlling a pass, using either foot.
- Throw-ins

### Basic Techniques

Focus your attention on the listed points for each technique as you observe your players. It is important for your players to learn to practice techniques properly, but remember that this may take some time - more for some techniques than others, and more for some players than others. Again, be patient and be encouraging! Practice all foot skills with both right and left feet.

#### Dribbling

- Small controlled steps.
- Ball should be kept close (approximately 2-3 feet) in front of you.
- Strike the ball with either the instep - toes pointed down, the inside of the foot - toes pointed up, contact ball midway in foot or outside of the foot - toes pointed down.
- Look up frequently to establish eye contact.
- Change speed and direction.

#### Dribbling to Beat an Opponent

- Keep the ball close and dribble straight at the opponent.
- Use sudden movements of shoulders or fakes of body to get opponent to lean to one side.
- Immediately take the ball in the other direction and sprint past.
- Once past, look up to take a shot or pass.

#### Dribbling for Speed

- Play the ball well out in front.
- Keep your head up.
- Play the ball with your instep.
- Take a few long touches.

#### Inside of the Foot Pass

- Ankle locked.
- Foot slightly up at the toe.
- Thigh turned outward.
- Look up to establish eye contact.
- Connect with the middle of the ball just before the instep.
- Follow through (contributes to direction and pace of the pass).

### **Controlling a Pass**

- Move toward the ball (don't wait for it to come to you).
- Inside or outside of the foot used most often.
- Foot surface first touching the ball should be withdrawn slightly on contact to take the momentum out of the ball ("cushioning").
- Ball should not be stopped completely, but under close control.
- Redirect ball in front or to the side in anticipation of moving in that direction to pass or dribble.

### **Shooting**

- Head down.
- Ankle locked with foot pointing downward at the toe.
- Strike the ball with the laces of the shoe.
- Accuracy before power (avoid shooting directly at the goalkeeper).

### **Throw-ins**

- Ball MUST go directly over the head.
- Both hands must remain on the ball (R and L thumbs meet behind the ball; thumbs and fingers of both hands form a W).
- Both feet must be on the ground (not necessarily flat; it is permissible to drag the toe of the trailing foot).
- As soon as ball is released, player should get back onto the field (often to receive a return pass).

## **Coaching Points**

### **Dribbling**

- Keep on toes all the time.
- Touch ball after every step (keep ball close).
- Look up after every touch (vision).
- Find space.
- Contact (inside, laces, outside) will depend on the direction player wants to go.
- Concentrate on balance.
- Change speed.
- Change direction. Accelerate after change of direction.
- Work on different types of deception (feints).
- Keep body between ball and opponent.

### **Passing**

- Keep on toes all the time (be ready).
- Look up and take 'snapshot'.
- Make decision who to pass to, then head down and keep eye on ball, ankle locked with toe up, swing leg in straight plane, follow through center of ball.

### **Receiving**

- Keep on toes all the time (be ready).
- Get body behind line of ball, look up take 'snapshot'.
- Make decision where to turn when ball is controlled (away from pressure), then keep eye on ball, offer largest area of contact to ball, cushion ball by giving slightly on contact, trap towards the ground, push ball out to side 1-2 yards (away from pressure) to enable to take in stride.

## **Weekly Practice Curriculum**

The next several pages will describe weekly practice plans for the U07 program. Practices will run approximately 30 minutes in duration, followed by 30-45 minutes of 3v3 games. We attempt to divide the time used for practices into warm-up, themed activities, and small-sided work. The practices will be themed weekly for focus in a particular area (i.e. shooting, dribbling, passing, etc).

<b><u>Week</u></b>	<b><u>Theme</u></b>
1	Shooting
2	Passing
3	Ball Control
4	Shooting
5	Passing
6	Ball Control
7	Upside Down Week
8	Ball Control
9	Shooting

# U7 – Week 1 –

## 30 Minute Practice Theme of the Week – Shooting

### Warm-up: (10 minutes) – Individual Foot Skill Work – All Players have balls

#### 1. **Dribbling in an area** – (one circle 6 – 8 yards depending on numbers)

- Both feet (have the kids move around the circle weaving in and out of players)
- Left only, right only (have the kids move....)
- Walk backwards pulling the ball with the sole of the foot. – Try to increase speed
- Walk sideways using the sole of the foot. Try to increase speed

#### 2. **Simon Says**

- Have all players in a small grid with a ball.
- Begin dribbling and instruct players to move in various directions, stop or speed up, slow down, use right or left foot only by saying Simon Says or not.
- Players that do not obey the command must do something silly – be creative!
- To add more fun have the players stop the ball with a body part – foot, elbow, knee, nose. The goofier the better.

### Group Activities (10 min) - Suggested Activities – (Pick one or two of the activities below)

1. **City Blocks:** Set up city blocks (make 4, 5 X 5 yd boxes, one on each corner with a goal). Split up the kids equally in each corner. Have them dribble at speed to the next block going clockwise. They have to shoot the ball in the next block. Variations – go 2 blocks away, then 3, then 4. Coaches – act as police, firemen, traffic lights, have fun.
2. **Bee Stings:** Each player with a ball in a grid. They dribble around chasing the coach and try to “sting” him by shooting the ball at him.
3. **Fox & Hunters:** ½ kids with balls, other ½ without. Kids with balls are hunters, kids without are foxes. Hunters try to “shoot” the foxes, who, in turn, run around in the grid. Switch them up. Remember fox ears.

### **Small-Sided Games – (10 min) - (Development at this age is best in small groups. Please try to keep the numbers less than real game situations. There will be time for 3v3 or 4v4 in the real game)**

1. 2 v 1, in a 20 x 15 yd area with goals on both end lines. Serve the ball to the offense (2 players) and tell the defense (1 player) the ball is in play when the offense touches. Encourage players to settle the ball and pass it back and fourth to beat the defender and score a goal. The defender can steal the ball and score as well. Keep it short. Rotate players every 30-45 seconds if no goal is scored. Encourage shooting and passing.

**Note:** If this seems to be too advanced for the kids you can have two children work together both playing offense dribbling and passing there way towards the goal until they get close enough for one of them to shoot on goal.

## U7 – Week 2 –

# 30 Minute Practice

## Theme of the Week – Passing

### Warm-up: (10 minutes) – Individual Foot Skill Work – All Players have balls

1. **Juggling:** Hold ball in hands. Alternate bouncing off left or right thigh and catch. Build up to kicking bouncing off of the foot and catching it.
2. **Soccernastics:** Boxing, Hat Dance, individually first, then form pairs. One passes to the other. The receiving player receives the ball in routine (i.e. receives it doing hat dance) and passes it back.  
**Note:** If you are not sure what Hat Dancing or boxing is see Mike Poe, Pete Bloznalis or Mark Bianchi

### Group Activities (10 min) - Suggested Activities – (Pick one or two of the activities below)

1. **Line Passing:** 3 players in a line. Middle player stands still with legs apart. Two outside players try to pass to each other through the legs of the middle player. Play for 1 minute and have the kids keep score. Then switch the players around.
2. **Target Passing:** Form pairs 5 yards apart. One ball per pair. Place two cones 1 yard apart in front of each player. Player 1 tries to pass it between the cones in front of player 2, vice versa. Don't let the receiving player step in front of the cones. The receiving player should receive the ball with the inside of the foot. Do not have them step on the ball – this is a no-no. Build up the passing – left only, right only. Try to get the receiving player to play the ball back more quickly – be patient
3. **Soccer Bowling:** In the middle of a grid 10 yds by 15 yds, set up 5 or 6 disks. On each disk place a ball. Place two teams on either side of the grid (long sides). Each player with a ball. Have them knock the balls off the disks. If they succeed, have them go get the ball they knocked over as their trophy. Important point. Once they serve a ball, don't have them chase it. There will be plenty of balls coming through.

**Small-Sided Games – (10 min)** - (Development at this age is best in small groups. Please try to keep the numbers less than real game situations. There will be time for 3v3 or 4v4 in the real game)

2 v 1, in a 20 x 15 yd area with goals on both end lines. Serve the ball to the offense (2 players) and tell the defense (1 player) the ball is in play when the offense touches. Encourage players to settle the ball and pass it back and fourth to beat the defender and score a goal. The defender can steal the ball and score as well. Keep it short. Rotate players every 30-45 seconds if no goal is scored. Encourage shooting and passing.

**Note:** If this seems to be too advanced for the kids you can have two children work together both playing offense dribbling and passing there way towards the goal until they get close enough for one of them to shoot on goal.

## U7 – Week 3 –

# 30 Minute Practice

## Theme of the Week – Ball Control

### Warm-up: (10 minutes) – Individual Foot Skill Work – All Players have balls

#### Simon Says

- Have all players in a small grid with a ball.
- Begin dribbling and instruct players to move in various directions, stop or speed up, slow down, use right or left foot only by saying Simon Says or not.
- Players that do not obey the command must do something silly – be creative!
- To add more fun have the players stop the ball with a body part – foot, elbow, knee, nose. The goofier the better.

#### Relay races

Two lines on either side of a goal. Run straight to a cone 10 yards away, do a 360 around the cone, run back towards goal and finish with a shot. Next teammate goes.

### Group Activities (10 min) - Suggested Activities – (Pick one or two of the activities below)

1. **Alligator Alley:** Set up 3, 5 x 10 yard areas with goals at one end. Create a danger strip in the middle (3 x 5) with cones. Have a coach or a parent crab or crawl around in the danger zone. The players have to dribble around the coach/parent and shoot on the goal at the other end.
2. **Follow the Leader:** Form pairs. Have one ball per pair. Players with the balls dribble in an area (use your discretion for size). The other players follow closely behind their partner. Encourage the dribbling player to weave, go in circles, etc. Blow the whistle or shout “turn!” and the player dribbling has to turn with the ball and play it through his/her partner’s legs (tell the partner that when you yell “turn” they have to jump to an open leg position). Then switch. Keep score.

**Small-Sided Games – (10 min) - (Development at this age is best in small groups. Please try to keep the numbers less than real game situations. There will be time for 3v3 or 4v4 in the real game)**

1. 2 v 1, in a 20 x 15 yd area with goals on both end lines. Serve the ball to the offense (2 players) and tell the defense (1 player) the ball is in play when the offense touches. Encourage players to settle the ball and pass it back and fourth to beat the defender and score a goal. The defender can steal the ball and score as well. Keep it short. Rotate players every 30-45 seconds if no goal is scored. Encourage shooting and passing.
2. 3 v 2 – multiple goals – place cones on the ground. Make 4 goals. Either team can score on any goal. This can be very advanced for most kids at this age.

**Note:** If this seems to be too advanced for the kids you can have two children work together both playing offense dribbling and passing there way towards each of the goals until they get close enough for one of them to shoot on goal. They can rotate around to all of the goals.

## U7 – Week 4 –

# 30 Minute Practice

## Theme of the Week – Shooting

### Warm-up: (10 minutes) – Individual Foot Skill Work – All Players have balls

#### 1. Dribbling in an area – (one circle 6 – 8 yards depending on numbers)

- Mexican hat dance (player brings one foot up and taps the top of the ball, alternate feet)
- Dribble both feet (have the kids move around the circle weaving in and out of players)
- Dribble left only, right only (have the kids move....)
- Walk backwards pulling the ball with the sole of the foot. – Try to increase speed
- Walk sideways using the sole of the foot. Try to increase speed

**Note:** If you are not sure what Hat Dancing is see Mike Poe, Pete Bloznalis or Mark Bianchi

**Note:** Coaches can ask the kids to dribble and at the same time try and look up at them to see the number of fingers they are holding up.

#### 2. Relay races

- Two goals 20 yds apart facing each other. Each kid with a ball. 4 lines – two on either side of each goal. Kids race toward other goal and shoot. Once they shoot, first kids in the other two lines go the other way and shoot.
- Two lines, start at each side of a goal with ball. Dribble ball out around a cone 6 yards in front of each player. On the way back have player take a shot on goal (one chance), after shot, next player goes (each kid with a ball).

### Group Activities (10 min) - Suggested Activities – (Pick one or two of the activities below)

**Fox & Hunters:** ½ kids with balls, other ½ without. Kids with balls are hunters, kids without are foxes. Hunters try to “shoot” the foxes, who, in turn, run around in the grid. Switch them up. Remember fox ears.

**Clean Your Room:** 20 X 25 yd grid with a 5 yard ‘dead zone’ in the middle. This leaves two 10 x 20 areas on either side of the zone. Each player with a ball. They must shoot their ball into the other teams zone. The team with the least balls in their zone when time is called is the winner. The players cannot play the ball out of bounds. It must be in the opponent’s zone to count.

**Small-Sided Games – (10 min) -** (Development at this age is best in small groups. Please try to keep the numbers less than real game situations. There will be time for 3v3 or 4v4 in the real game)

2 v 1, in a 20 x 15 yd area with goals on both end lines. Serve the ball to the offense (2 players) and tell the defense (1 player) the ball is in play when the offense touches. Encourage players to settle the ball and pass it back and forth to beat the defender and score a goal. The defender can steal the ball and score as well. Keep it short. Rotate players every 30-45 seconds if no goal is scored. Encourage shooting and passing.

**Note:** If this seems to be too advanced for the kids you can have two children work together both playing offense dribbling and passing there way towards the goal until they get close enough for one of them to shoot on goal.

## U7 – Week 5 –

# 30 Minute Practice

## Theme of the Week – Passing

### Warm-up: (10 minutes) – Individual Foot Skill Work – All Players have balls

#### 1. **Dribbling in an area** – (one circle 6 – 8 yards depending on numbers)

- Both feet (have the kids move around the circle weaving in and out of players)
- Left only, right only (have the kids move....)
- Walk backwards pulling the ball with the sole of the foot. – Try to increase speed
- Walk sideways using the sole of the foot. Try to increase speed

#### 2. **Soccernastics:**

Boxing, Hat Dance, individually first, then form pairs. One passes to the other. The receiving player receives the ball in routine (i.e. receives it doing hat dance) and passes it back. Introduce 360 turns using inside and outside of foot.

### Group Activities (10 min) - Suggested Activities – (Pick one or two of the activities below)

1. **Soccer Bowling:** In the middle of a grid 10 yds by 15 yds, set up 5 or 6 disks. On each disk place a ball. Place two teams on either side of the grid (long sides). Each player with a ball. Have them knock the balls off the disks. If they succeed, have them go get the ball they knocked over as their trophy. Important point. Once they serve a ball, don't have them chase it. There will be plenty of balls coming through.
2. **Line Passing (Thru Wickets):** 3 players in a line. Middle player stands still with legs apart. Two outside players try to pass to each other through the legs of the middle player. Play for 1 minute and have the kids keep score. Then switch the players around.
3. **Wickets:** Set up a 10 yd circle of cones. Have ½ the players pick up their ball and stand with legs apart (wicket or goal). The other players dribble their ball and score a goal by knocking the ball thru a wicket. Have them go to the next (different) wicket to score another. Time for 30-60 seconds and have players keep score. Have players change positions. See who can get the most goals.

### **Small-Sided Games – (10 min) - (Development at this age is best in small groups. Please try to keep the numbers less than real game situations. There will be time for 3v3 or 4v4 in the real game)**

1. 2 v 1, in a 20 x 15 yd area with goals on both end lines. Serve the ball to the offense (2 players) and tell the defense (1 player) the ball is in play when the offense touches. Encourage players to settle the ball and pass it back and fourth to beat the defender and score a goal. The defender can steal the ball and score as well. Keep it short. Rotate players every 30-45 seconds if no goal is scored. Encourage shooting and passing.
2. 3 v 2 – multiple goals – place cones on the ground. Make 4 goals. Either team can score on any goal. This can be fairly advanced for some children at this age.

**Note:** If this seems to be too advanced for the kids you can have two children work together both playing offense dribbling and passing there way towards each of the goals until they get close enough for one of them to shoot on goal. They can rotate around to all of the goals.

## U7 – Week 6 –

# 30 Minute Practice Theme of the Week – Ball Control

### Warm-up: (10 minutes) – Individual Foot Skill Work – All Players have balls

1. **Dribbling in an area** – (one circle 6 – 8 yards depending on numbers)
  - Both feet (have the kids move around the circle weaving in and out of players)
  - Left only, right only (have the kids move....)
  - Walk backwards pulling the ball with the sole of the foot. – Try to increase speed
  - Walk sideways using the sole of the foot. Try to increase speed
  - Mexican Hat Dance. Try while pulling the ball back, then forward.
  - Pick up the ball and drop it. Trap it with the sole of the foot. Then have them trap with the inside/outside of the foot while they are moving.
2. **Spiderman:** Provide a 15 yd. x 15 yd. grid. Each player should have a ball. The coach starts as the first spider. The players dribble around the grid while trying to avoid the tag of the spider. When the coach tags a player, they join hands and go after new prey. Each successive tagged player makes the web of the spider grow bigger, but, alas, less organized. Young players will request this game constantly.

### Group Activities (10 min) - Suggested Activities – (Pick one or two of the activities below)

1. **King of the Ring:** Provide a 10 yd. x 10 yd. grid where each player has a ball. One player or the coach is "it" without a ball. Players start to dribble in the grid while trying to avoid having their ball kicked out of the grid by the player who is "it". Players can reenter the grid after retrieving their ball and completing some type of small skill penalty activity, like juggling the ball twice on their feet or knees or dribbling around a nearby tree before returning to the grid.
2. **Duck, Duck Goose (Soccer Style):** Kids form a circle. One player has a ball and dribbles it around the outside of the circle. The player with the ball goes around the circle and taps someone on the head. The "tapped" player then chases the ball carrier around the circle (but the ball carrier must dribble the ball back to the spot). If the ball carrier gets back to the "tapped" player's space before getting tagged. The "tapped" player is it. If the "tapped" player tags the ball carrier, the ball carrier is still "it". If one player is "it" for too long the coach can switch them out..and everyone gets a turn to be "it"..
3. **Fox & Hunters:** ½ kids with balls, other ½ without. Kids with balls are hunters, kids without are foxes. Hunters try to "shoot" the foxes, who, in turn, run around in the grid. Switch them up. Remember fox ears.

**Small-Sided Games – (10 min) -** (Development at this age is best in small groups. Please try to keep the numbers less than real game situations. There will be time for 3v3 or 4v4 in the real game)

2 v 1, in a 20 x 15 yd area with goals on both end lines. Serve the ball to the offense (2 players) and tell the defense (1 player) the ball is in play when the offense touches. Encourage players to settle the ball and pass it back and fourth to beat the defender and score a goal. The defender can steal the ball and score as well. Keep it short. Rotate players every 30-45 seconds if no goal is scored. Encourage shooting and passing. Progress to 3v2..

## U7 – Week 7 –

# 30 Minute Practice

## Theme of the Week – Fun Day!

### Warm-up: (10 minutes) – Individual Foot Skill Work – All Players have balls

#### 1. **Dribbling in an area** – (one circle 6 – 8 yards depending on numbers)

- Both feet (have the kids move around the circle weaving in and out of players)
- Left only, right only (have the kids move...)
- Walk backwards pulling the ball with the sole of the foot. – Try to increase speed
- Walk sideways using the sole of the foot. Try to increase speed
- Mexican Hat Dance. Try while pulling the ball back, then forward.
- Pick up the ball and drop it. Trap it with the sole of the foot. Then have them trap with the inside/outside of the foot while they are moving.

#### 2. **Simon Says**

- Have all players in a small grid with a ball.
- Begin dribbling and instruct players to move in various directions, stop or speed up, slow down, use right or left foot only by saying Simon Says or not.
- Players that do not obey the command must do something silly – be creative!
- To add more fun have the players stop the ball with a body part – foot, elbow, knee, nose. The goofier the better.

### Group Activities (10 min) - Suggested Activities – (Pick one or two of the activities below)

1. **Game 1:** Have a relay race using no soccer balls
2. **Game 2:** Use the soccer ball as if you were doing a water balloon toss. Have the kids get into pairs throwing the ball back and forth while they move backwards until the last group is standing
3. **Game 3:** Play hot potato where all kids get in a circle and pass one ball around the circle using their hands. Every ten seconds stop them and the child with the ball is out until the last kid is standing.

**Small-Sided Games – (10 min)** - (Development at this age is best in small groups. Please try to keep the numbers less than real game situations. There will be time for 3v3 or 4v4 in the real game)

1. 2 v 1, in a 20 x 15 yd area with goals on both end lines. Serve the ball to the offense (2 players) and tell the defense (1 player) the ball is in play when the offense touches. Encourage players to settle the ball and pass it back and fourth to beat the defender and score a goal. The defender can steal the ball and score as well. Keep it short. Rotate players every 30-45 seconds if no goal is scored. Encourage shooting and passing.
2. 3 v 2 – multiple goals – place cones on the ground. Make 4 goals. Either team can score on any goal.

**Note:** If this seems to be too advanced for the kids you can have two children work together both playing offense dribbling and passing there way towards each of the goals until they get close enough for one of them to shoot on goal. They can rotate around to all of the goals.

## U7 – Week 8 –

# 30 Minute Practice Theme of the Week – Ball Control

### Warm-up: (10 minutes) – Individual Foot Skill Work – All Players have balls

1. **Dribbling in an area** – (one circle 6 – 8 yards depending on numbers)
  - Both feet (have the kids move around the circle weaving in and out of players)
  - Left only, right only (have the kids move....)
  - Walk backwards pulling the ball with the sole of the foot. – Try to increase speed
  - Walk sideways using the sole of the foot. Try to increase speed
  - Mexican Hat Dance. Try while pulling the ball back, then forward.
  - Pick up the ball and drop it. Trap it with the sole of the foot. Then have them trap with the inside/outside of the foot while they are moving.
2. **Spiderman:** Provide a 15 yd. x 15 yd. grid. Each player should have a ball. The coach starts as the first spider. The players dribble around the grid while trying to avoid the tag of the spider. When the coach tags a player, they join hands and go after new prey. Each successive tagged player makes the web of the spider grow bigger, but, alas, less organized. Young players will request this game constantly.

### Group Activities (10 min) - Suggested Activities – (Pick one or two of the activities below)

1. **King of the Ring:** Provide a 10 yd. x 10 yd. grid where each player has a ball. One player or the coach is "it" without a ball. Players start to dribble in the grid while trying to avoid having their ball kicked out of the grid by the player who is "it". Players can reenter the grid after retrieving their ball and completing some type of small skill penalty activity, like juggling the ball twice on their feet or knees or dribbling around a nearby tree before returning to the grid.
2. **Duck, Duck Goose (Soccer Style):** Kids form a circle. One player has a ball and dribbles it around the outside of the circle. The player with the ball goes around the circle and taps someone on the head. The "tapped" player then chases the ball carrier around the circle (but the ball carrier must dribble the ball back to the spot). If the ball carrier gets back to the "tapped" player's space before getting tagged. The "tapped" player is it. If the "tapped" player tags the ball carrier, the ball carrier is still "it". If one player is "it" for too long the coach can switch them out..and everyone gets a turn to be "it"..
3. **Red Light - Green Light:** Every player has a ball and lines up along one end of the field. The coach stands at the other end and calls the command "red light" and "green light". Players can dribble towards the coach on "green light" but must stop quickly on "red light" because the coach spins around to spot any moving players. Players seen moving are sent back to the start. Players try to get past the coach without being spotted.

**Small-Sided Games – (10 min) -** (Development at this age is best in small groups. Please try to keep the numbers less than real game situations. There will be time for 3v3 or 4v4 in the real game)

2 v 1, in a 20 x 15 yd area with goals on both end lines. Serve the ball to the offense (2 players) and tell the defense (1 player) the ball is in play when the offense touches. Encourage players to settle the ball and pass it back and forth to beat the defender and score a goal. The defender can steal the ball and score as well. Keep it short. Rotate players every 30-45 seconds if no goal is scored. Encourage shooting and passing. Progress to 3v2.

## U7 – Week 9 –

# 30 Minute Practice Theme of the Week – Shooting

### Warm-up: (10 minutes) – Individual Foot Skill Work – All Players have balls

#### 1. **Dribbling in an area** – (one circle 6 – 8 yards depending on numbers)

- Both feet (have the kids move around the circle weaving in and out of players)
- Left only, right only (have the kids move....)
- Walk backwards pulling the ball with the sole of the foot. – Try to increase speed
- Walk sideways using the sole of the foot. Try to increase speed

#### 2. **Simon Says**

- Have all players in a small grid with a ball.
- Begin dribbling and instruct players to move in various directions, stop or speed up, slow down, use right or left foot only by saying Simon Says or not.
- Players that do not obey the command must do something silly – be creative!
- To add more fun have the players stop the ball with a body part – foot, elbow, knee, nose. The goofier the better.

### Group Activities (10 min) - Suggested Activities – (Pick one or two of the activities below)

4. **Keep your Yard Clean:** Divide the field in half with a line of flat cones. Players are divided into two teams one in each half. There are about half as many balls as players. Each team tries to keep its own half "clean" by shooting all the balls into the other half as fast as possible. Players may not cross the centerline (shooting line). From time to time the coach whistles; all players freeze and the balls are counted. The team with fewer balls in its half scores one point (up to five points).
5. **Bee Stings:** Each player with a ball in a grid. They dribble around chasing the coach and try to “sting” him by shooting the ball at him.
6. **Fox & Hunters:** ½ kids with balls, other ½ without. Kids with balls are hunters, kids without are foxes. Hunters try to “shoot” the foxes, who, in turn, run around in the grid. Switch them up. Remember fox ears.

### **Small-Sided Games – (10 min) - (Development at this age is best in small groups. Please try to keep the numbers less than real game situations. There will be time for 3v3 or 4v4 in the real game)**

3. 2 v 1, in a 20 x 15 yd area with goals on both end lines. Serve the ball to the offense (2 players) and tell the defense (1 player) the ball is in play when the offense touches. Encourage players to settle the ball and pass it back and fourth to beat the defender and score a goal. The defender can steal the ball and score as well. Keep it short. Rotate players every 30-45 seconds if no goal is scored. Encourage shooting and passing.

**Note:** If this seems to be too advanced for the kids you can have two children work together both playing offense dribbling and passing there way towards the goal until they get close enough for one of them to shoot on goal.

## **Alternatives to Activities/Games Listed Above – Feel free to improvise!!**

**The key thing is stick to the Theme of the Week!  
It keeps the kids focused on the “main” skill area for most of the practice.**

### **DRIBBLING GAMES:**

#### **Beehive**

Mark off a 10 yd. x 10 yd. square with cones. Each player has a ball. Players dribble inside the grid using correct techniques and avoiding other players. Now impose restrictions to encourage players to work on particular skills. Provide new instructions every 30 to 60 seconds. Try these variations:

- Vary speed ("1st gear", "2nd gear", etc.);
- Right or left foot only;
- Cones - put as many cones around the square as there are players; on command everyone must find an unoccupied cone and dribble to it (or try it with one less cone than the number of players - the player who is left without a cone receives a fun "penalty", such as a "leaper" [jumping high in the air and trying to pull both knees to the chest]);
- Obstacle course - 6 to 12 cones placed randomly within the square; players concentrate on dribbling without knocking over the cones;
- Shark - players must turn, change speed and direction to avoid the shark (the coach or a player); if caught, the player must freeze and count slowly to 10 before resuming his or her dribble.
- Now invent your own restrictions - the possibilities are endless!

#### **Cone Dribble**

Set up a number of cones arranged in two straight lines. Split the team into two groups and have them weave through the cones by dribbling. Start out slowly then turn it into a race. Dribblers can be restricted in how they dribble – right foot only, inside of feet only, etc.

#### **Get Your Ball**

Divide your team into two groups, one at each end of the practice field. On the midline place two fewer balls than there are players. On command all players sprint to the midline and try to get a ball. The object is to retrieve a ball and dribble it back over the endline from which you started. Players without a ball challenge the dribblers and try to kick their ball away.

#### **Great Wall of China**

Each player has a ball. The "Great Wall" is the coach, who moves back and forth along the centerline. A small goal is marked on each endline using cones. Each player tries to dribble from one goal to the other, while the coach moves back and forth, trying to keep everyone from crossing. Players must wait for a hole and "scoot" through. Each goal scores one point, but if the coach touches a player's ball, that player loses a point. Who can score the most points in a given time?

#### **Pacman**

Two players are selected to be pacmen and stand outside the grid until the game begins. All other players dribble a ball inside the grid. Pacmen try to tag players who are dribbling the balls. If tagged, the player is frozen until another player passes a ball through the frozen player's legs. Game ends when all players are frozen.

## **SHOOTING GAMES**

### **Bingo**

A number of cones are distributed throughout the field. Two players are the "replacers;" each of the others has a ball. The players with balls try to knock down as many cones as possible with their balls. The "replacers" (all players take turns in this role) set up the cones as fast as they're knocked down. When a player knocks down a cone, they yell "Bingo!" (this adds to the excitement). Who can score the most "Bingos?"

### **Clean up your Field**

Divide the field in half with a line of flat cones. Players are divided into two teams one in each half. There are about half as many balls as players. Each team tries to keep its own half "clean" by shooting all the balls into the other half as fast as possible. Players may not cross the centerline (shooting line). From time to time the coach whistles; all players freeze and the balls are counted. The team with fewer balls in its half scores one point (up to five points).

### **Star Wars**

This classic game is very exciting for younger players! Set up a 10 yd. x 20 yd. grid. Have all the players line up at one end prepared to run to the other end. The coach or a player stands just outside the grid at midway with several balls at the ready. On command the players attempt to run to the endline while evading balls kicked at them by the coach. All shots should be kept below waist level. Players hit by the balls become new additional shooters until only one runner is left.

### **Tunnel Soccer**

Each player has a ball. The coach has no ball, but moves about the field with the players. While moving around the field, from time to time the coach stops and spreads his legs to form a "tunnel." Enlist other coaches or parents to be additional tunnels. The players dribble after him and try to shoot through the tunnel whenever he stops. After three shots, the coach moves on again. Who can score the most points in 5 minutes?

## **PASSING GAMES**

### **Bridges**

Scatter half of the team widely around the field with instructions to stand with legs spread apart (they are the "bridges"). The remaining players, each with a ball, dribble to a bridge, pass their ball under it, retrieve the ball and advance to another bridge. Players may not pass under the same bridge twice in a row. Players keep track of the number of bridges they can negotiate in 1 minute, then switch bridges and dribblers and repeat.

### **Cone Game**

Players pair up and stand across from each other around a circle. Set up 6 or 8 cones in the middle of the circle as targets. Partners try and knock over the cones in the middle with accurate passes.

### **Pass, Sprint and Dribble**

Players in pairs face each other about 5 yd. apart; one player with a ball, the other standing with legs spread apart. The player with the ball passes it with the inside of the foot through the legs of his partner. As soon as the ball passes between his legs, the partner turns, sprints to catch up with the ball, turns it 180 degrees back to his starting position; he is now the passer.

## Additional Foot Skills for More Advanced U07s...

### Turning

Changing direction is an important skill that young players need to know. Here are six basic turns that are used at the highest levels of soccer. Each turn will take many hours of practice to master, but once learned will greatly improve his/her game. For the younger players, the Stop Turn and the Drag Back should be taught. Older age players should master all the turns.

- **Stop Turn:** Move the ball in one direction. Stop the ball with the sole of the right foot. Continue past the ball. Turn quickly, play the ball with the same foot in the opposite direction. Bend your knees. Accelerate away after the turn. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.
- **Drag Back:** Move the ball in one direction. Turn the ball under the body by dragging the ball in the opposite direction with the sole of your right foot. Turn quickly, play the ball with the same foot in the opposite direction. Bend your knees. Accelerate away after the turn. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.
- **Inside Hook:** Move the ball in one direction. Reach and hook the ball with the inside of your right foot and move in the opposite direction. Bend your knees. Accelerate away after the turn. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.
- **Outside Hook:** Move the ball in one direction. Reach and hook the ball with the outside of your right foot and move in the opposite direction. Bend your knees. Accelerate away after the turn. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

## Upton Mendon U7 Soccer – [Fall 2007]

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**Coaches:** We recommend that prior to engaging the kids in the various activities below that you spend a few minutes up front doing some warm up exercises.

### **Foot Skills:**

- **Fundamentals:** Review the fundamentals of basic passing, shooting and dribbling. Demonstrate what good looks like by passing, shooting and dribbling in front of the group.
- **Hat Dancing** – Have each child do 30. Hat Dancing is when a child touches their foot to the top of the ball and proceeds to continue this motion jumping back and forth.
- **Boxing** – Have each child do 30. Boxing is when each child passes the ball back and forth between their legs keeping the ball shoulder with apart.
- **Dribbling in an area** – (one circle 6 – 8 yards depending on numbers)
  - Both feet (have the kids move around the circle weaving in and out of players)
  - Left only, right only
  - Walk backwards pulling the ball with the sole of the foot. – Try to increase speed
  - Walk sideways using the sole of the foot. Try to increase speed
- **Dribbling for speed**
  - Two lines at midfield facing the goal. Children should take turns dribbling towards goal and taking a shoot.
  - Two lines, start at each side of a goal with a ball. Dribble ball out around a cone [approximately 15 yards]. On the way back have player take a shot on goal (one chance), after shot, next player goes (each kid with a ball).
- **Body Parts:** Have the kids dribble in an area and, on your command, they stop the ball with a different part of their body, elbows, ears, knees, butts, etc.
- **Soccernastics:** Boxing, Hat Dance, individually first, then form pairs. One passes to the other. The receiving player receives the ball in routine (i.e. receives it doing hat dance) and passes it back.
- **Juggling:** Hold ball in hands. Alternate bouncing off left or right thigh and catch. Hold ball in hands. Alternate kicking off left or right foot and catch.

**We would suggest that you mix up the Foot Skills and Activities each week to keep the kids interest level high. I would recommend doing a few Foot Skills and a few Activities prior to them starting their games.**

**Note:** If you are not sure what Hat Dancing or Boxing is see Karen Rogers (Age Group Coordinator)

**Note:** We would encourage you to work into your practice as many water breaks as needed...

## Upton Mendon U7 Soccer – [Fall 2007]

**Coaches:** We recommend that prior to engaging the kids in the various activities below that you spend a few minutes up front doing some warm up exercises. It is recommended that you start with Foot Skills before transitioning to the activities below.

### Suggested Activities:

1. **Passing Drill:** Have players line up approximately 5 -10 yards apart and have them pass the ball back and forth. They should be trying to strike the ball with the side of their feet. Coaches could have them alter between left and right feet.
2. **City Blocks:** Set up city blocks (make 4, 5 X 5 yd boxes, one on each corner with a goal). Split up the kids equally in each corner. Have them dribble at speed to the next block going clockwise. They have to shoot the ball in the next block. Variations – go 2 blocks away, then 3, then 4. Coaches – act as police, firemen, traffic lights, have fun.
3. **Bee Stings:** Each player with a ball in a grid. They dribble around chasing the coach and try to “sting” him by shooting the ball at him.
4. **Fox & Hunters:** ½ kids with balls, other ½ without. Kids with balls are hunters, kids without are foxes. Hunters try to “shoot” the foxes, who, in turn, run around in the grid. Switch them up. Remember fox ears.
5. **Target Passing:** Form pairs 5 yards apart. One ball per pair. Place two cones 1 yard apart in front of each player. Player 1 tries to pass it between the cones in front of player 2, vice versa. Don’t let the receiving player step in front of the cones. The receiving player should receive the ball with the inside of the foot. Do not have them step on the ball – this is a no-no. Build up the passing – left only, right only. Try to get the receiving player to play the ball back more quickly – be patient.
6. **Follow the Leader:** Form pairs. Have one ball per pair. Players with the balls dribble in an area (use your discretion for size). The other players follow closely behind their partner. Encourage the dribbling player to weave, go in circles, etc. Blow the whistle or shout “turn!” and the player dribbling has to turn with the ball and play it through his/her partner’s legs (tell the partner that when you yell “turn” they have to jump to an open leg position). Then switch. Keep score.
7. **Knock Out:** Set up a 10 yd circle of cones. Each player dribbles a ball inside the circle of cones. One player stays outside the cones without a ball. Coach tells the players to keep the ball close and shield the ball from the “knock out” player. The knock out player is released into the circle of cones and tries to knock out all of the balls from the circle of cones. Once you are knocked out you cannot come back in until next game. Have these players sit on their ball to see who the last player with a ball is in the circle. The last player to be knocked out is the new “knock out” player. Repeat game several times.
8. **Relay Race:** Have a relay race with our without soccer balls
9. **Head Balls:** Line kids up and practice heading the soccer ball. Eyes open and use their forehead
10. **Shooting Techniques:** Line kids up and let them shoot on the coach or a parent in goal
11. **Practice Throw-ins:** Using two hands and throwing the ball to a partner

**Note:** We would encourage you to work into your practice as many water breaks as needed...