

MEDWAY YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

INSTRUCTIONAL LEAGUE COACHING MANUAL AND COURSE CURRICULUM

Revised April, 2000

INTRODUCTION

In the Spring of 1994, the Board of Directors of Medway Youth Soccer, Inc. created the Instructional League to expose younger children to the game of soccer. The program was based entirely upon the national curriculum developed by Major League Soccer Camps (formerly North American Soccer Camps) and their assistance in implementing the League has been immeasurable.

PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of coaching in the Instructional League is twofold:

1. Never forget for whom the program was designed and who you are coaching; and
2. Never forget the best teacher of the game of soccer is the game of soccer itself.

Children between four and six years of age have distinct developmental characteristics. They have extremely short attention spans, they learn more easily by doing than by being taught, they are just learning the concept of group games and activities, their physical coordination is just beginning to develop, and having fun is far more important to them than winning. As a coach and as a parent, your conduct and expectations must be appropriate to the age of the kids you are coaching. Hence, as an Instructional League coach, it is far more important that you are magical and entertaining than it is for you to be well versed in the game of soccer.

Unlike most American sports, soccer is a non-stop, fluid game. There are no time outs and plays can not be called in from the sideline. Hence, soccer is a game of instinct. Technique (dribbling, passing, receiving, shooting, etc.) can be taught, but how a player applies the technique under pressure can only be learned instinctively during game related activities. This is where most American coaches fail in training. We tend to over analyze, over plan and over coach our players. The Instructional League is designed to introduce the children to basic soccer technique - nothing more. If a child learns to apply technique under game related pressure, hence to develop "skills", it shall be considered an absolute bonus.

A coach or a parent who instructs from the sideline is robbing the player of two things. First, the ability to improve and develop his or her own instincts, and second, the most essential element of our program - FUN. Whether you are four or forty years of age, it is no fun to be barked at while playing soccer.

GOALS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEAGUE

FOR THE CHILDREN

1. **FUN** - Provide the children with an environment that is fun and magical.
2. **GROUPS** - To help the children understand the concept of play in small groups or teams.
3. **PASSION** - To foster a passion for the game in the children.
4. **TECHNIQUE** - To teach basic soccer techniques to the players.

FOR THE COACHES

1. **FUN** - To remind each of us why we want to coach.
2. **WHO** - To remind each of us who it is that we are coaching and for whom the program was designed.
3. **PASSION** - To excite the coaches about the game
4. **COACHING** - To help coaches develop proper coaching technique.

PARENTS

1. **FUN** - To give them the opportunity to see their children grow, learn and have fun in an upbeat, exciting environment.
2. **QUIET** - To teach parents that screaming instructions or directions from the sideline is detrimental to their child and all of the children playing. Be supportive, but **be quiet**.

FORMAT

The Instructional League will run concurrently with the Intramural Program. It is an eight- (8) week season. Before the season begins, there will be a condensed coaching course.

COACHING COURSE

The Coaching Course is **mandatory** for all coaches. It is a great opportunity to be introduced to coaching and to meet the others with whom you will be coaching. Coaching techniques and the curriculum of the Instructional League Course will be reviewed.

SESSIONS

The Instructional League is held on Lower Oakland Park Field each Saturday morning from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM. There are three (3) separate sessions each running approximately one (1) hour. The First Session runs from 9:15 - 10:15 AM, the Second Session runs from 10:30 - 11:30 AM and if necessary, the Third Session runs from 11:30 - 12:30 PM. Each Instructional League team will be assigned to the same session all season.

GOALS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEAGUE

Each session will have a "Session Captain" who is responsible for coordinating the session from beginning to end. Any changes or substitutions as Session Captain must be done at least a week in advance if possible. The First Session Captain is responsible for arriving at the fields at least by 8:30 AM and coordinating the field and equipment set-up. The Late Session captain is responsible for coordinating the field break-down at the end of the morning.

Each team will have one Coach and an assistant coach. No practices during the week are permitted. The concept of teams is to be very loosely interpreted as the numerical reality of many sessions may demand player adjustments to achieve balance amongst the teams.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum attached will be followed faithfully. It has been developed over the past seven seasons and appears to consistently entertain and instruct the children. Any deviations from the curriculum or any problems with it must be discussed with the League Director. The curriculum was developed with the input of most every Coach and we will continue to fine-tune the program over the years.

ORGANIZATION

Each Coach **MUST** come to the field prepared and organized. He or she should know exactly where the session is in the curriculum and should know which games will be played. Each Coach should have the games for each session outlined on an index card they can use as a reminder on the field. Each coach should look like a coach, dressed to play. *No whistles* are to be used at any time.

PUNCTUALITY

Each Coach **MUST** be punctual. Saturday mornings can provide a Coach with many challenges to leave his or her home, but we must always remember, the task at hand is far more important than additional sleep or a second cup of coffee.

COACHING TIPS

COACHING PROGRESSION

When a Coach observes a player using incorrect technique, he or she should follow the following steps to assist the player in understanding the correct way to perform that technique.

1. **STOP PLAY.** The Coach must first stop play as quickly as possible. Doing it definitively will insure that the Coach has the player's undivided attention. Remember - Instructional League players have an attention span of not more than thirty (30) seconds. Therefore your corrections have to be short, concise and exactly to the point.

GOALS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEAGUE

2. **DEMONSTRATE.** The Coach must only pick out one (1) coaching point. There may be several points to accurately striking a soccer ball, but the Coach must pick out one for the child to work on. The Coach should assume the position of the player and demonstrate the proper technique. Avoid recriminations such as "No...no...no...You're doing it ALL wrong!" Instead, use supportive less threatening language, always pointing out positives in the player's technique (even if there are none). "Nice pass Johnny. You got it right to Melanie. This time why don't you try doing this.... Then you'll almost be ready to play for the Revolution..."
3. **REHEARSAL.** The Coach must have the player rehearse the technique. The Coach must stay and observe the rehearsal to make certain the player understands the correction. Do not expect anything but slight improvement. Coaches must encourage the player despite the level of improvement. There should be no more than one rehearsal as children this age become very self-conscious and a Coach must be careful not to correct the same player more than twice during a single session. They are there to have fun, not to listen to lectures.
4. **RESTART.** The Coach should immediately restart play. The key is that there is no disruption in the flow of the game. Once children this young have attained a certain rhythm in their play, let them go.

CONCLUSION

The Instructional League, like all aspects of Medway Youth Soccer, was designed for our Children to play. It gives our youngest players the opportunity to have fun with a soccer ball, and perhaps develop a love for the game. If our players learn as well as have fun, we have more than done our job. You as Coaches are entertainers first and teachers second. It's a wonderful opportunity to simply play with our children, with a ball. Keep in mind that the sessions incorporate Games, not Drills.

Note that the League Coordinator has, in the past, been likely to call a Hawaiian Luau, or Hat Day, or some such nonsense, in which all coaches and players are actively encouraged to dress up. Often, balloons and treats are also part of the day. You are encouraged to modify your games to incorporate appropriate names or identities. You are also encouraged at this time to simply act silly and dress outrageously. Children appreciate an honest sense of humor. (Bring extra costume items for those who forgot theirs.)

CURRICULUM

WEEK ONE

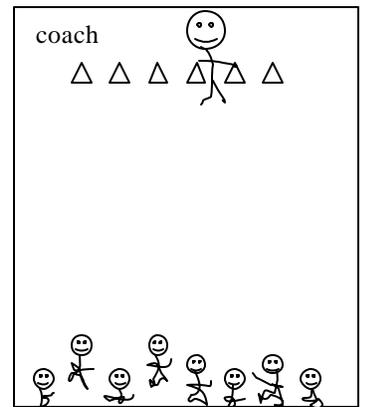
OBJECTIVE: Strike the ball with the inside of the foot. Dribble the soccer ball under control like a dog on a leash. "If you kick a puppy too hard, he will run away to live with another family. You must pet the puppy softly with the inside of your foot."

WARM-UP: SIMON SAYS

Players spread out in area, each with a ball. They dribble slowly around the area while Simon [Coach] calls out various instructions. If "Simon says...", the players are to heed the instruction. If Simon does not give the instruction, the players are to ignore it. Sample instructions are: stop, turn right, turn left, knee on the ball, sit on the ball, hold ball over your head, elbow on ball.

CONTROL: ARTHUR'S ICE CREAM (Red light/Green light)

Arthur [Players] start in his yard [along one end line of the field] while Buster [Coach] stands at the other end line with his back to Arthur and with ice creams [cones] scattered on the ground just behind him. When Buster turns his back, Arthur sneaks up, dribbling a soccer ball, to try to steal an ice cream cone. Once they have retrieved a cone, each Arthur dribbles back to his yard.. Buster randomly turns around and shouts, "WHERE'S ARTHUR?" whereupon each Arthur must stop his soccer ball and "freeze". If an Arthur is caught moving when Buster turns around, he must go back to the beginning.



RUNNING WITH THE BALL: DON'T LOSE YOUR HAT

Relay race. There should be no more than three (3) players in each line so as to avoid down time. Each player wears a hat [cone] and tries to dribble to a cone on the ground ten (10) yards away, around it and back to her line at which the next player in line repeats and so on. The players must keep their hats on and can hold it with one hand if they wish.

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6 v. 6 game. No more than six field players at a time. Extra players can play goal keepers. If the ball goes out of bounds or there is any DANGER on the field (e.g. a player near the ball falls) Coaches must scream "FREEZE" to stop play. Coaches restart play by throwing a ball onto the field and yelling "PLAY". No whistles. Remember the principal of Library Soccer is that no external directions are given to the players by Coaches or by Parents. Before the game, emphasize the lesson of the day.

WEEK TWO

OBJECTIVE: Strike the ball with the inside of the foot. Dribble the soccer ball under control like a dog on a leash. "If you kick a puppy too hard, he will run away to live with another family. You must pet the puppy softly with the inside of your foot."

WARM-UP: BULL DOGS (Tag)

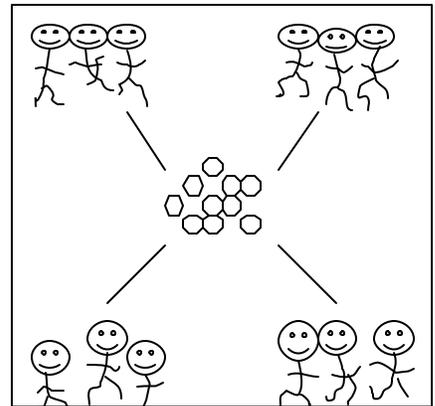
A bunch of cats [Players] are sitting on a back yard fence [end line]. They want to get across the back yard [area] to get the fish bones [cones]. However, there is a bulldog [Coach] in the back yard who hates cats. The cats run across the back yard to get a fish bone and return to the fence without getting bitten [tagged] by the bulldog.

CONTROL: BULL DOGS

Same as above except the cats [Players] dribble soccer balls across the back yard and back.

RUNNING WITH THE BALL: POKEMON

Players are divided in four (4) equal groups, Ashes, Mistys, Brocks, and Surges. Each group is in a corner of a box. Pokemons [Balls] are placed in the center of the area. One at a time, a Player from each group runs to the center, gets control of a Pokemon and dribbles it back to her corner. This is done until all players in the line have each grabbed a Pokemon. Essentially a relay game, Pokemon should be repeated five or six times.



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Before the game, emphasize the lesson of the day.

WEEK THREE

OBJECTIVE: Using all parts of the foot to control the ball.

WARM-UP: SODA FOUNTAIN

The four- (4) sides of the area are each given a name of a soda (e.g. Coke, Sprite, Root Beer and Orange). Each Player has a soccer ball. The Coach calls out one of the names of soda and each player is to dribble to that side of the area. Encourage use of the bottom and outside of the foot to stop, turn and control the ball in changing directions.

CONTROL: WHAT TIME IS IT MR. WOLF

Similar to Arthur's Ice Cream (see Week One). The Little Pigs [Players] line up at the edge of the forest [one end line] while Mr. Wolf [Coach] is at the other end with his back to the pigs. Just behind Mr. Wolf are cones. The Little Pigs try to sneak up, grab a cone and dribble back to the edge of the forest to safety. As the Little Pigs are dribbling up behind Mr. Wolf they shout, "What time is it Mr. Wolf?" Whereupon Mr. Wolf turns around and shouts menacingly "It's Dinnertime!" The players must stop their soccer ball and freeze.

Any Little Pigs with rolling soccer balls are sent back to the edge of the forest.

DRIBBLING: DEMOLITION DERBY

Drivers [Players] spread out in a circle around the cones. They dribble around the cones while the Coach yells instructions such as "Red Light (stop)", "Green Light (go)" and "Crash (drivers fall to the ground)". Drivers must change directions using all parts of their feet to avoid collisions with other drivers.

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WEEK FOUR

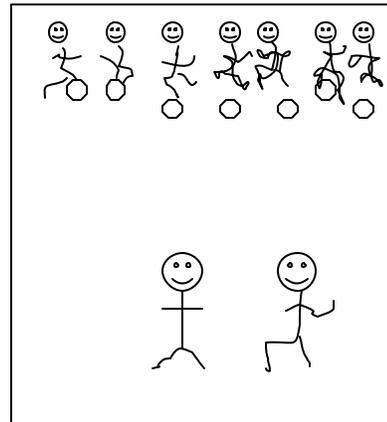
OBJECTIVE: Dribbling with your head up so you can see your team mates and players on the other team.

WARM-UP: TERMINATOR

Players dribble around the city [area] trying not to collide with others or lose control of their soccer ball. The Terminator [Coach] jumps into the city and tries to kick Players' soccer balls out of the area. If a Player's soccer ball is kicked out of the area, they must retrieve it, return to the area, hold the ball over their head and spread their legs wide. They are frozen until and unless another Player dribbles his soccer ball through their legs at which point they may drop their ball back on the ground and resume dribbling. Coaches should only kick those soccer balls that are not being controlled close to the Player's feet.

CONTROL HUNGRY HIPPOS

Safari Hunters [Players] start at one side of the mud hole [area] where the Hungry Hippos [Coaches] are taking a mud bath. They must try to get to the other side of the mud hole without disturbing the bathing Hippos. The Hippos try to kick the Safari Hunters' soccer ball out of the mud hole. If the Hippo kicks a Hunter's ball out, the Hunter becomes a Hippo. Process should be repeated back and forth several times.



RUNNING WITH THE BALL CHARGE !

This is the opposite of Hungry Hippos. The Light Brigade [Players] line up on one end of the battle field to charge. Two (2) Guards [Coaches] are standing guard in the area, each with a soccer ball. The Players charge past the Guards as they try to hit members of the Light Brigade with passes beneath the knees. Each Player hit with a pass becomes a Guard. Play until the last member of the Light Brigade is left.

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WEEK FIVE

OBJECTIVE: Passing using all surfaces of the feet but primarily the inside of the foot.

WARM-UP: SODA FOUNTAIN IN PAIRS

Same as Soda Fountain in Week 3 except the players are teamed in pairs and the pairs must get the ball to the appropriate side together with passes.

CONTROL: CATDOG

Cats and Dogs [Players] are in pairs: CatDogs. They dribble and pass their soccer ball around the area trying to avoid the other CatDogs. They also try to kick the soccer ball belonging to other pairs of CatDogs out of the area.

WEIGHT OF THE PASS: LION KING

Each of the Players is Simba trying to sneak up behind Zazu. In turn they pass their soccer ball from one rock [a small triangle of cones] to the next. The rocks are arranged randomly across the area. They must not pass the ball too hard or too soft because they won't be able to hide from Zazu behind the rock. Emphasize weight of the pass.

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WEEK SIX

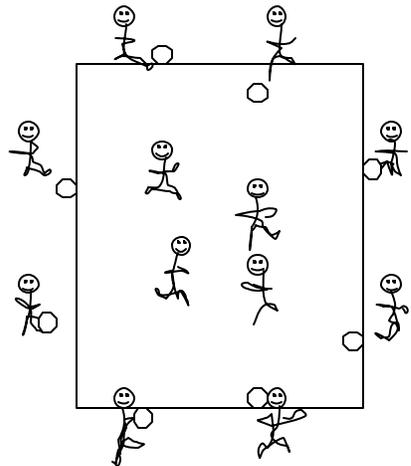
OBJECTIVE: Passing and controlling the ball with heads up.

WARM-UP: BULLDOGS

See Week 2.

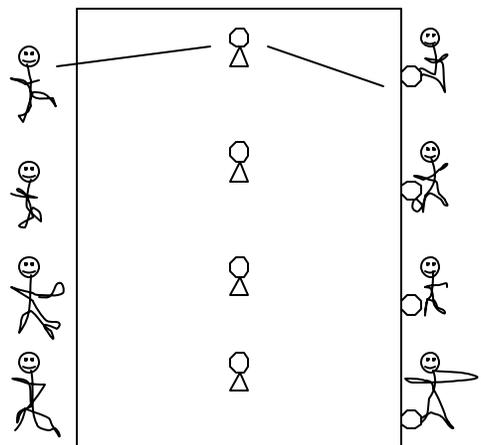
CONTROL: JAWS

Three or four fishermen [Players] are in the middle of a boat [a square approximately eight to ten yards]. On the outside of the boat are sharks [other Players]. The sharks take turns trying to pass their soccer balls into the boat striking a fisherman beneath the knees. After a few rounds, the Fishermen should be switched with the Sharks.



PASSING: STARVING MONKEYS

Two lines of Starving Monkeys [Players] are facing each other approximately six (6) to eight (8) yards apart. Each Monkey should have a partner facing her in the other line. In the middle of the two (2) lines are trees [cones] with a bunch of bananas [a soccer ball] on them. The partners pass a coconut [another soccer ball] between them in an attempt to knock the bananas out of the tree.



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WEEK SEVEN

OBJECTIVE: Passing and shooting.

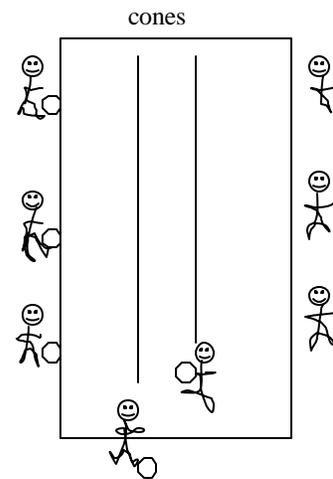
WARM-UP: TERMINATOR

See Week 4.

PASSING: RUG RATS

The Rug Rats [1/3 of the Players] are very hungry. There are lollipops [cones] at one end of the playroom [a corridor of cones approximately eight (8) yards wide]. Unfortunately, the Rug Rats are at the other end of the room and there are Angelicas [the other Players] on each side of the playroom, each with a soccer ball. One at a time the Rug Rats run down the room and the Angelicas attempt to hit them below their knees with passes. Once a Rug Rat reaches the end of the playroom, he waits until the Angelicas reload, then runs back.

First have the Rug Rats simply run down the playroom, then have them dribble a soccer ball down. Alternate groups.



CONTROL AND SHOOTING: CATCH THE PIGEON

Two teams of hungry foxes [Players] line up at each end of the area. Each fox has a number. The Coach calls out a number and tosses a pigeon [soccer ball] into the middle of the area. The Player with the corresponding number from each team runs, tries to gain control of the pigeon, dribble it back toward their side of the field and shoot it into the net.

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WEEK EIGHT

OBJECTIVE: REVIEW OF COURSE

WARM-UP: SODA FOUNTAIN

See Week 3

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FULL FIELD

6v6 with substitutions made every four (4) to five (5) minutes.

Round Robin Tournament with other teams.

Coaches throw in from sides. No whistles.

Explanation of Positions: Offense vs. Defense

Goalies allowed