

U12 Coaching Manual
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PART I - THE LAWS OF THE GAME

Law 1 - The Field of Play

- Cross Association uses several different facilities during the season, because of this field size may vary. The field for U12 must be between 45 x 70 yards (minimum) and 55 x 80 yards (maximum). Goals are either 6 x 18 feet or 7 x 21 feet.

Law 2 - The Ball

- U12 division teams will play with a size 4 ball.

Law 3 - The Players

- Games will be played 9 v 9 (8 field players and one goalkeeper)
- There must always be a goalkeeper.
- Substitutions are unlimited and occur at the team's own throw-ins and all goal kicks.
 - Players should wait at the center line and enter when the referee tells them to enter
- You may change goalkeepers during any stoppage of play as long as the referee is informed

Law 4 - The Players' Equipment

- **All jewelry MUST be removed to play.** (Jewelry is defined as any ornamental object or device, including necklaces, rings, bracelets, earrings, leather bands, rubber bands, etc.) Soft hair ties or headbands are permitted. **Use of tape or Band-Aids to cover jewelry is not permitted.**
- All players must wear the following equipment:
 - Fury FC jersey
 - Black Shorts
 - Black Socks
 - Appropriate shin guards worn UNDER the socks
 - Soccer-specific cleats.

Law 5 - The referee[s]

- Decisions of the referee[s] and other match officials must always be respected
- A referee who realizes a call is mistaken can change the call up until the restart of play. Once play has restarted, the decision is final.
- In the event of an injured player, the referee may allow play to continue if the injury does not seem serious and the player is not in danger. The referee will stop play to address the injury when appropriate for the flow of the game or immediately if the injury is deemed to be serious. Coaches must wait for the referee's permission to step onto the field.

Law 6 - Other Match Officials

- Two assistant referees are responsible for assisting the referee in performing his duties. This includes signaling with a flag when the ball goes out of play, when a player is fouled, or when a player is in an offside position.

Law 7 - The Duration of the Match

- Games will consist of two 30 minute halves with a 5 minute halftime

Law 8 - The Start and Restart of Play

- Kickoff
 - All players except the player taking the kick must be in their own half of the field
 - All opponents must be outside the center circle
 - After a goal is scored, the non-scoring team will restart with a kickoff
 - The player taking the kickoff may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player
 - A goal may be scored against the opponents from a kickoff. The kicking team cannot score on themselves from a kickoff.
- Dropped ball
 - In cases where play is stopped for reasons other than a goal or foul (e.g. for injury), play is restarted with a dropped ball for the team who last touched the ball, UNLESS
 - If the ball was in the penalty area, the ball is dropped for the defending goalkeeper regardless of whom last touched it
 - The ball must hit the ground before it is kicked
 - All other players must be at least 8 yards from the ball until it touches the ground
 - A dropped ball must touch at least two players before a goal can be scored

Law 9 - The Ball In and Out of Play

- The ball is out of play when it has wholly passed over a boundary line on the ground or in the air.

Law 10 - Determining the Outcome of a Match

- A goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between the goal posts, and under the crossbar.
- Score is not kept.

Law 11 - Offside

- A player is guilty of an offside offense if ALL of the following conditions are met
 - The player is in the opponent's half of the field - AND -
 - The ball is played to them by a teammate - AND -
 - Any part of the player's body other than the hand or arm is closer to the goal line than the ball or the second to last defender (there is only one opponent between them and the goal) at the time the ball is played by a teammate - AND -
 - The player in an offside position becomes involved in play or interferes with their opponent's ability to play the ball
- If the above conditions are met, an offside offense has occurred and the opponent will be given an indirect free kick
- A player cannot be offside on a throw-in, goal kick, or when receiving the ball directly from a corner kick
- Please note
 - Offside is an extremely complex rule. The basics are listed here, but there are many other circumstances which may either create an offside offense or negate one. Please trust your referees.
 - For more information and explanation on offside view the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GePIbCsGniA>

Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

- A cautioned player must leave the field for a cooling down period (5 mins). The player may be substituted. The player may re-enter the match at the next stoppage.
- Players sent off WILL NOT be replaced for a Red Card. Players (or coaches) sent off WILL NOT attend the next game played AND WILL NOT be visible from the field of their team game.
- Any send offs should be reported in writing immediately to Cross Association Commissioner and/or the League by the Referee for that game and the Coach of the sent off player and may come under formal review by an appointed committee due to severity of infraction for any additional disciplinary action deemed appropriate.
- Direct and indirect free kicks may only be awarded if an offense occurs with the ball in play
- A direct free kick may be awarded if a player commits the following against an opponent in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless, or with excessive force.
 - Charges
 - Jumps at
 - Kicks or attempts to kick
 - Pushes
 - Strikes or attempts to strike
 - Tackles or challenges
 - Trips or attempts to trip
 - Commits a handball offense
 - Holds an opponent
 - Impedes an opponent with contact
 - Moves into the path of an opponent when the ball is not in playing distance (usually 3-6')
 - Bites or spits at someone
 - Throws an object at the ball or hits the ball with a held object
- An indirect free kick may be awarded if a player:
 - Plays in a dangerous manner
 - Defined as play which threatens injury to the player himself or any other player, or which prevents an opponent from playing the ball due to threat of injury
 - Impedes an opponent without contact
 - Is guilty of dissent (arguing with the ref) or using offensive, insulting, or abusive language or actions
 - Prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball
 - A goalkeeper touches the ball with the hand or arm after releasing it and before it has touched another player
 - A goalkeeper touches the ball after it has been deliberately kicked to them by a teammate or it has been thrown in by a teammate
- The goalkeeper is in control of the ball whenever the ball is between the hands or between the hands and any surface, is holding the ball in an outstretched open hand, or when they are bouncing it on the ground or in the air.

- The goalkeeper cannot be challenged by an opponent when in control of the ball
 - Depending on whether or not contact was made, the referee may award a direct or indirect kick
- Commonly misunderstood foul situations
 - Charging
 - Soccer is a contact sport. Not all contact is a charging offense
 - Legal charges are shoulder to shoulder and are designed to move a player off the ball. They are not careless, reckless, or using excessive force
 - Any contact deemed by the referee to be other than shoulder to shoulder (eg. shoulder to chest or center of back or a “hip check”) may be deemed an illegal charge
 - Handball offenses
 - Not all contact with hand or arm is a handball offense
 - There are many things that the referee will consider before blowing a whistle for a handball, including
 - Was the action deliberate or reflexive
 - Did the player’s arms make their silhouette larger
 - What part of the hand or arm was struck by the ball
 - Was the position of the hand or arm a natural position for the player’s movement
 - Was a goal scored from the hand or arm or did immediately after the contact
 - This should always result in a disallowed goal and a whistle for the handball
 - Advantage
 - The referee may give ‘advantage’ in the case of a foul that occurs where the offended team would be better off continuing to play instead of stopping for the free kick
 - For example, red #1 is fouled by blue #2, but red #3 recovers the ball and is heading unopposed for the goal
 - Advantage should be signaled by the referee by stating “Play On”

Law 13 - Free Kicks

- There are two types of free kicks
 - Indirect free kicks
 - A goal cannot be scored from an indirect kick until the ball has touched another player
 - Indicated by the referee holding his arm straight up until the ball hits another player, goes out of bounds, or it otherwise becomes clear a goal cannot be scored directly from the kick
 - Direct free kicks
 - A goal may be scored against the opponent directly from a direct free kick
 - If the ball goes directly into the kicker’s own goal, no goal is scored
- All free kicks are taken from the location where the offense occurred except

- A free kick to the defending team inside their own goal area may take place from anywhere inside the area
- A free kick to the attacking team inside the opponent's goal area must take place from the closest point on the goal area line
- The ball must be stationary when kicked and is in play when it is kicked and clearly moved
- All opponents must be at least 8 yards from the ball until it is in play
- The kicker may not touch the ball again until it is touched by another player

Law 14 - The Penalty Kick

- A penalty kick is awarded if a player commits a direct free kick foul inside their penalty area
- The ball must be stationary on the penalty mark and must be kicked forward
- The goalkeeper must have at least part of one foot on or over the goal line until the ball is kicked and be facing the kicker
- All other players must be at least 8 yards from the penalty mark, outside the penalty area, and behind the penalty mark
- The kicker may not touch the ball again until it has been touched by another player
- No player may enter the penalty area until the ball is kicked
- The kicker must take the kick once the runup is complete

Law 15 - The Throw-in

- A throw-in is used to place the ball back in play when it has wholly crossed the touchline
- The throwing player must, at the time of release, be standing facing the field of play with part of each foot on or behind the touchline and throw the ball using both hands from behind and over the head
- Opponents must be at least 2 yards from the point of the throw-in
- If the ball fails to enter the field of play from a proper throw-in, the throw-in is retaken
- If the throwing player does not take the throw-in properly, the throw-in goes to the opposing team
- The throwing player may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player

Law 16 - The Goal Kick

- A goal kick is awarded if the attacking team kicks the ball out of bounds over the opponent's goal line
- The ball must be stationary and is kicked from any point within the goal area by any member of the defending team
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
 - It no longer has to leave the penalty area to be in play
- Opponents must be outside of the penalty area until the ball is in play
- The kicker may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player
- An goal may not be scored on the kicking team's goal, but may be scored against the opponent

Law 17 - The Corner Kick

- A corner kick is awarded if the defending team kicks the ball out of bounds over their own goal line
- The ball must be stationary and located on or inside the corner arc

- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
- The corner flag must not be moved
- Opponents must remain at least 8 yards from the corner arc until the ball is in play
- The kicker may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player
- A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.

PART II- U12 AGE GROUP CHARACTERISTICS & SKILL/TACTICAL PRIORITIES

Typically players of this age begin to understand the basic tactical situations of the game and are more aware of movement off the ball and the reasons for tactical choices. Problem-solving becomes systematic and these players tend to learn quickly. Children of this age typically are beginning to develop abstract awareness, so they can understand coaches when we talk about space and runs off of the ball. However, just because they understand these basic tactical concepts does not mean we should focus on these concepts entirely.

Players are still developing technically at this age, especially as they go through growth spurts and awkward phases. It is quite common to look out at a U12 field and see players that are physically the size of adults. Yet, other U12 players appear as if they could still be in the 3rd grade. These children are all growing at different rates and undergoing physical, mental, emotional, and social changes. As coaches, we need to be sensitive to these changes and their social implications when coaching this age group, especially in a co-ed setting.

Some players may pick up skills quickly, whereas others may struggle. However, it may be the case that this is simply the result of differences in maturation. In a year, the slower developer may surpass the player who developed earlier. For this reason we need to be patient and keep open minds about all players through these years. They are aware of their struggles more than anyone else as peer evaluation is omnipresent at these ages. When we see them struggling, it is important for us to help them and keep the game fun.

Skills to learn: feints with the ball; receiving bouncing & air balls with the thigh & chest; heading to score goals & for clearances while standing or jumping; outside of foot pass; bending shots; crossing to the near post space & the penalty spot space; heel pass; flick pass; introduce chipping to pass; introduce half volley & volley shooting; introduce slide tackle. For goalkeepers: footwork; W grip; bowling; low dives & forward diving; angle play; near post play; introduce deflecting & boxing; sidewinder kick.

Typical Characteristics of U12 Players

- All children are maturing at different rates
- Players need to warm-up and stretch - muscle pulls and other nagging injuries are common otherwise
- Players will typically understand elemental abstract concepts and hypothetical situations
- They like to solve problems
- Peer evaluation is a constant and egos are very sensitive
- Coordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt
- Technique still needs to be reinforced constantly and a primary focus
- Playing too much and not feeling like they have a choice in the matter can lead to burnout and drop-out
- This is the dawn of tactics!
- Keep asking the players to be creative and to take risks - we never want them to stop doing these things
- Ask for feedback from them - they will tell you how things are going and feel like they have more of a say
- Try to hand over leadership and ownership of the team to them
- Keep it fun! - No laps, lines, lectures

Skill Coaching Priorities

Dribbling at speed in Traffic and in open space

Dribble with all sides & surfaces of both feet (inside, outside, sole, etc)

Dribble using moves to beat a player or to quickly change directions

Dribble out of trouble rather than kick – Institute a two touch minimum rule to discourage kicking the ball out of panic

Short range passing – inside/outside of both feet

Long range passing – driven aerial balls/chipping

Movement to open spaces after passing the ball

Shooting with both feet - using the laces for power and the inside/outside for accuracy

Receiving and 1st Touch to control and keep possession of the ball – on the ground or out of the air (Using the inside, outside, top of the foot, chest, thigh, head)

Juggling using different parts of the body – HOMEWORK

Defending techniques

Tactical Coaching Priorities

Communication – verbal and visual

Basic Support Positions – angles of support behind, in front, to the side of the ball

Receiving the Ball Away from Pressure-1st touch

Combination Play – give and go, third man run

How and when to switch the point of attack

Defensive Pressure vs Containing – when, why, and how

Proper 2 vs 2 roles – attacking vs defending

Introduction to all roles in 3 vs 3 and 4 vs 4

Defensive - 1st Defender Pressure, 2nd Defender Cover, 3rd Defender Balance

Attacking – 1st Attacker Penetrate, 2nd Attacker Support, 3rd Attacker Balance

PART III - COACHING TIPS

- In the U12 division, the primary focus should be on learning the rules, development of skills, and having fun
 - Winning is not the objective. The objective is player development!
- Generally, players should be given the opportunity to play all positions
- As a rule, every player should expect to play at least 50% of each game, with playing time spread evenly across players regardless of skill or ability
- A common formation for 9 v 9 play is 3-3-2 (3 defenders or backs, 3 midfielders, and two forwards/strikers), but 3-2-3, 3-1-3-1, or any other combination can be effective
- Regardless of position, players should attack and defend together.
 - Defenders should not be planted on the penalty area line and told to stay there until the ball comes to them. They should move forward to about midfield when the team is on the attack and likewise the forward(s)/striker(s) should not wait around the goal but should fall back to around midfield when the team is on defense.
 - Realistically, in the college division players should be learning a basic understanding of the different positions and should usually stay at least on their assigned side of the field (left/right, offense/defense)
- **Head injuries are a serious concern. Know the signs of concussion and bench any player suspected of head injury until they are cleared by a physician.**
 - The referee has the right to prevent any player suspected of having a head injury from returning to the game.
- “Joysticking” players is the practice of shouting instructions to your players throughout the game. Generally, this should not happen as the players cannot process a coach’s instructions and play the game at the same time. A better coaching concept is to substitute the player you need to talk to out of the game, give them instructions on the sideline, and then put them back into the game.
 - Reliance on “joysticking” creates soccer players with low soccer IQ who don’t know what to do if the coach isn’t shouting at them
 - Avoidance of “joysticking” creates thinking, innovative soccer players with high soccer IQ. They may fail more often at first, but the soccer IQ they will develop through trial and error is highly desirable for the players’ long-term development!
- Make sure to plan practice sessions out beforehand
 - Planned activities addressing particular skills or topics
 - A sample 60 minute practice plan is:
 - Warm up and individual ball handling - 15 minutes
 - Small sided games or activities, set piece practices, scrimmages - 30 minutes
 - Cool down and reinforcement of skills taught - 15 minutes
 - Players should be standing still as little as possible during practices
 - Instructions should be given in a minute or two at the most and then all players should participate together with nobody waiting in line to participate.

Cross Association Code of Conduct for Coaches

1. An adult serving as a Coach must be on the player side of the field throughout the entire game for all games. Coaches should remain in their own technical area.
2. All coaches should carry with them an up to date roster to confirm eligible players.
3. Coaches must set an example of good sportsmanship, fair play and ethical behavior at ALL TIMES. Offensive or inappropriate language or behavior will not be tolerated during practices or games. Coaches must show courtesy and respect to their players, opponents, parents, spectators, referees and each other. Coaches must treat all of their players fairly and favoritism toward any player must be avoided.
4. Coaches shall not threaten or attempt to intimidate any player, spectator or referee and shall not permit their players to threaten or attempt to intimidate another player, spectator or referee. Coaches shall not make derogatory or critical comments about opposing players, coaches, spectators and shall discourage their players and parents from making such remarks.
5. Coaches are directly responsible for the behavior of the parents and spectators of their team on and off the field at ALL locations. Additional responsibilities include:
 - a. Parents and players are familiar with the rules of the game and that all matches are played within the limits of those rules.
 - b. Parents and spectators do not enter the field of play during games without authorization from the referee or coach. Entering the field of play without authorization may result in the person being removed from the field and quarantined to the parking lot.
 - c. Parents and players do not use unsporting, offensive or inappropriate language or behavior during practices or games.
6. Coaches must look out for the safety of their players at all times and bring to the attention of the referee any situations that could jeopardize the safety of their players. They also must be alert to potentially dangerous situations arising because of actions by their own players. Coaches should not hesitate to substitute a player whose actions could lead to injuries or alterations among players.
7. The use of alcohol is strictly prohibited at all practices and games at all locations. This includes county facilities as well as privately owned fields.
8. The use of tobacco and tobacco products (including “E” vapor products is prohibited during practices and games. Parents should be reminded to refrain from smoking.
9. Violations shall be reported to the Cross Association Commissioner in writing within 72 hours of any incident for investigation and recommendation of appropriate action.

Additional Notes:

- No more than one Head Coach and one Assistant Coach from each team will be allowed on the same side as the players. All other coaches/spectators should be on the opposite side of the playing field. NO EXCEPTIONS.
 - Head Coaches: please do not allow additional Assistant Coaches to coach from the parent sideline or from behind the goal area. The other parents don't appreciate it, it is very distracting for the players and other teams and doesn't help the children with everyone yelling coaching directions at them. No one should be standing behind the goal or taking photographs or coaching from behind the goal.
- If on any given game day, either or both teams are short of players, both teams should share players so that those players that are present are able to play the game as scheduled. No players from any other team should be used as a guest player.
- Abuse of referees WILL NOT be tolerated.
- No player is allowed to be rostered to more than 1 league roster during any given season. The only exception is playing for your school league. Current rostered travel players cannot play for a recreational team under any circumstances and cannot play as guest players in any game.