

U8 Coaching Manual

Powhatan Fury FC

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PART I - THE LAWS OF THE GAME

Law 1 - The Field of Play

- The field for U8 is 15 yards x 25 yards. We use goals that measure 4 feet x 6 feet.
- A blue zone will be created around the goal where neither team can enter unless retrieving a dead ball. If the defensive team enters the zone and interferes with the play, then a goal is to be awarded. If the offensive team enters the blue zone to score, then the goal is to be disallowed and the ball awarded to the defensive team, where the ball will be restarted out wide by the touchline.

Law 2 - The Ball

- U8 teams will play with a size 3 ball.

Law 3 - The Players

- Games will be played 4 v 4 (no goalkeepers)
- Substitutions can be made by both teams at any stoppage of play; however, it is preferred that all substitutions be made at the quarter breaks.
- While playing, everyone should participate a minimum of 50% of the time.

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.
- All players must wear the following equipment:
 - Red or black Fury jersey
 - Shorts
 - Socks
 - Appropriate shin guards worn UNDER the socks
 - Soccer-specific cleats

Law 5 - The referee[s]

- None.

Law 6 - Other Match Officials

- None.

Law 7 - The Duration of the Match

- Games will consist of four 8 minute quarters

- 2 minute breaks in between quarters
- 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
 - No team can score directly from any restart: all restarts are considered indirect kicks.
- 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
 - **Heading of the ball is prohibited in U8 division play. Unintentional contact between head and ball will result in a dropped ball**
 - The ball must hit the ground before it is kicked
 - All other players must be at least five 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
- There will be no overtime.
- Score is not kept.

Law 11 - Offside

- Does not apply.

Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

- All fouls result in a direct free kick.
- The coach must explain all infringements to the offending player.
- No cards are shown.
- A direct free kick may be awarded if a player commits the following against an opponent in a manner considered by the coach 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
- 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
 - **Included is a player intentionally heading the ball**
- Impedes an opponent without contact
- Is guilty of dissent (arguing with the ref) or using offensive, insulting, or abusive language or actions
- 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 coach 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
 - Officials must remember that there is no need to stop play for technical violations that do not interrupt the flow of the game. It's a players game and not a game of how many infractions can be identified, so keep the fun going and let them play.

Law 13 - Free Kicks

- All free kicks are direct kicks.
- All free kicks are taken from the location where the offense occurred.
- The ball must be stationary when kicked and is in play when it is kicked and clearly moved
- All opponents must be at least 4 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

- None.

Law 15 - The Throw-in

- None. The ball is to be played from the point where it went out by a pass or dribble, which is treated as an indirect restart. If the team chooses to restart play with a pass, the defensive team is not allowed to intercept until the first pass has been put in play. The opposing team must be 4 yards away from the ball until it is back in play.

Law 16 - The Goal Kick

- Dribble in or pass in anywhere within the goal area. Opposing players must be in their half of the field until the ball is in play.

Law 17 - The Corner Kick

- None.

PART II - AGE GROUP CHARACTERISTICS & SKILL PRIORITIES

Although U8 children may begin to be more mature and physically advanced than U6 children, we must remain patient and not try to force them to develop too quickly.

Dribbling should continue to be the primary focus of our efforts, though passing and shooting should be introduced at this age as well. U8 players tend to work best when in pairs and we should allow them to work in pairs (coach selected) often. We must continue to make sure that fun is a central theme in practice. Player development will occur most appropriately and expeditiously if all players are enjoying themselves.

Other skills to learn: ball lifting & juggling; block tackle; receiving ground balls with the inside & sole of the foot; shoot with inside of the foot; toe pass & shot; introduce the push pass; agility; eye-foot & eye-hand coordination; movement education

Typical Characteristics of U8 Players

- Tend to play well in pairs – Try to set up the pairs yourself to control the games and manage the personalities
- Are now able to take another’s perspective – they now have a sense of how others are feeling
- Still unable to think abstractly – still do not have this capability, be patient
- Heating and cooling system less efficient than adults– make sure to give frequent water breaks
- Prefer playing to watching – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines, laps, or lectures
- Limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, up to 20 minutes when engaged in a task) – this may vary greatly on any given day depending on school, diet, etc. Try to get a gauge each day and do not fight crankiness
- Beginning to have an understanding of time and sequence and cause and effect – they now understand “if I do this, then that happens”
- Many have incorporated a third or fourth speed into play – not all players, but many players now have incorporated a speed or two between stopped and as fast as possible unlike the U6’s
- Extremely aware of adult reactions – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they will look for your reaction

- Seek out adult approval – be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you skills. They very much need reassurance and you need to help build their confidence to feel free to experiment and try new things
- Becoming aware of peer perception – a social order is beginning to develop, be sensitive to this.
- Wide range of abilities between children at this age – children all develop at varying paces. You may have an 8 year-old who seems more like a 10 year-old and one that seems more like a 6 year-old on the same team. Your challenge is to manage this range in your practices in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for each player's individual development.
- Some will keep score – the competitive motors churn faster in some than others. Surely some parents are fueling the motors with their own comments/reactions. Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age – it's not important. When the emphasis focuses on results, player development is sacrificed.
- Beginning to develop motor memories – by attempting and repeating fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements
- Less active imaginations than U6 players – still have active imaginations by adult standards, but some of the silliness that 6 year old players exhibit will not be appreciated by this group. Still use their imaginations; just watch their reactions to games to read how far you can go with things.

Skill Coaching Priorities

EMPHASIZE - Dribble with all sides & surfaces of both feet (Inside, outside, sole, etc)

Dribble out of trouble rather than just kick

Dribble past someone to penetrate

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

Shielding to keep the ball away from opponent

Soft first touch for control

Introduce shooting technique using the laces

Introduce passing using the inside and outside of the foot

Introduce Juggling - HOMEWORK

Keep it active and FUN! – No laps, lines, lectures

PART III - COACHING TIPS

- 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.

- We play small-sided with no keepers to promote movement and creativity for our younger players. With fewer players on the pitch, it is easier for every kid to get more touches on the ball. It also allows more space for each child to foster their creativity by giving them more time on the ball to make decisions.
- The club recommends a diamond shape to better incorporate basic concepts of offense and defense by creating multiple layered triangles. Players should be encouraged to attack and defend together. For example, a “defensive” player shouldn’t only hang out on the back half of the field and wait for the ball to come to them.
- Realistically, if you can keep players spread out around the field instead of clumped around the ball you’re doing just fine!
- “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.
- **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.**
 - Club staff have the right to prevent any player suspected of having a head injury from returning to the game



U8 Coach Binder

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