

Botkins SC

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Skill Priorities</u>
U-6	Dribble with all sides of both feet Dribble out of trouble Dribble past someone Soft first touch

Although sometimes we may mistake 5-6 year-olds for little adults, they are clearly not little adults. They have many years of childhood and development to enjoy before they are able to look at life in a similar fashion to adults. The reason for this is that they need time to intellectually, emotionally, and physically develop. Although we do live in the same world, when seen through our own eyes, the world both adults and children experience is quite different. In order to fully understand these wonderful children and to make practices run as smoothly and happily as possible, it is extremely important for us to understand the following characteristics about U6 children.

Typical Characteristics of U6 Players

- *focused on themselves* – reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel
- *unable to see the world from another's perspective* – it is “the world according to me” time. Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic
- *everything is in the here and now* – forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.
- *heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults* – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore
- *enjoying playing, not watching* – they feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing
- *limited attention span* (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions concise and to the point. When in an open environment, such as a park, their attention span will dwindle towards 10 seconds
- *effort is synonymous with performance* – if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm
- *active imaginations* – if we utilize their imaginations in practice activities, they will love practice!

- *look for adult approval* – watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!”
- *unable to think abstractly* – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic
- *typically have 2 speeds* -- extremely fast and stopped
- *usually unaware of game scores* – we should keep it that way
- *often like to fall down just because it is fun* – they are just children having fun ☺
- *often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot* – they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach them left and right

The U6 Age Group

The fascination for the ball, the desire to master it and the thrill of scoring goals provides the launching pad into a lifetime of soccer participation. The joy and pleasure of the game are best nurtured by encouraging freedom of expression and organizing children’s play in small groups.

Role of the U6 Coach

The role of the coach in the U6 age group is as facilitator, friendly helper, organizer, and motivator. The coach should be patient, enthusiastic, and imaginative. The coach should experiment with fun activities that include all players, if possible. The environment and the activities are more important than technical coaching is at this level.

The U6 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

Short attention span
 Individually oriented...egocentric
 Sensitive...Easily bruised psychologically
 Love to use their imagination...pretend
 Tend to only one task at a time
 Can process small bits of information
 Immature understanding of time and space relations

Physical (psychomotor)

Constantly in motion
No sense of pace (full speed ahead)
Easily fatigued with rapid recovery
Eye/hand and eye/foot coordination is primitive
Can balance on good foot
Catching skills are not developed
Love to run, jump, fall and roll

Socially (psychosocial)

Love to show off
Little or no real concern for team activities
Tend to parallel play...play next to but not with a friend or teammate
Like to mimic goofy actions

What to Teach U6 Players (Game Components)

Techniques (skills):

Dribbling

Keep the ball close (with toe and inside of foot).

Kicking

Kicking the ball at the goal (with toe, inside of foot, and laces).

Catching

Toss to self and catch.

Psychology (mental and social):

- Sharing
- Fair play
- Dealing with parental involvement (confusion)
- "How to play"
- Emotional management

Fitness (movement education):

- Balance
- Running
- Jumping
- Rolling
- Hopping
- Skipping

Tactics (decisions):

- Where is the field
- Moving in the correct direction (which goal to kick at)
- Dealing with the ball rolling away
- Dealing with the ball rolling toward

Rules:

The kick off
The goal kick
Ball in and out of play
Hand ball
Physical fouls (pushing, holding, striking, tripping)

The Training Session

General Information

- ✓ The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities.
- ✓ Facilitate fun activities that draw out the skill in the player.
- ✓ Small-sided games such as 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, should be included as well.
- ✓ Training should always conclude with a 3v3 game without goalkeepers if possible.
- ✓ The duration of the training session should be 45-60 minutes.