

# Fall 2007 Micro Kicker Coaching Guidelines

The objective of the Micro-Kicker program is for the players to have fun while developing soccer skills. This is best achieved when all players are actively engaged the majority of the time. When possible, try to play games that involve all the children. Avoid games that eliminate players for lengthy periods of time. Keep practice very active. Move from one activity to another very quickly with little down time.

Children that are 3-4 years of age have short attention spans and will not happily endure 2-5 minutes of lecture. Instead of lecturing, allow the children to become familiar with soccer through fun activities that help them build fundamental skills (dribbling, trapping, and shooting). Try to avoid spending more than 30 seconds explaining a skill/game/activity. Demonstrate a skill or activity briefly then ask a player to help demonstrate it to the others. Most importantly, try to avoid saying, "You are doing that wrong". Instead, reinforce positive behaviors with positive feedback.

## **Practice Structure**

- Warm-Up (5-10 minutes)
- Games/Activities (10-15 minutes)
- Scrimmage (10 minutes – be sure to provide at least one break during scrimmage)

***\*\*Don't forget to give frequent 2-3 minute water breaks throughout the session\*\****

The following pages list a variety of activities that can be used for Warm-up, Games, and Cool-Down. If you find the children losing interest in an activity, quickly change to another.

## Warm-Up

1. Ball Retrieval
  - a. The coach tosses the ball for each player to bring back with his or her hands, elbow, forehead, etc. Have all the players gather closely around you, but not in a line. Each one hands you their ball, which you toss randomly into an open area where they have to go retrieve it and bring it back to you in the manner that you specify as quickly as possible.
  - b. Progressions: Bring the ball back with two hands, one hand and one forehead, right foot only, etc. The coach should move around the area
  
2. Greeting Game
  - a. All the players run around randomly inside a rectangle. The coach calls out various types of greetings, which each players then has to carry out with others: shake hands, high fives (one hand), high fives (other hand), shoulder to shoulder, back to back, etc.
  - b. Progressions: Add dribbling
  
3. I Can, Can You?
  - a. Coach asks players, "I can do something without the ball, can you?" At this point the coach does some sort of physical movement without the ball (skip, walk and clap hands through legs, etc). After the coach does several examples he should ask the players if they have any suggestions and allow them to demonstrate.
  - b. Progressions: Introduce the ball and have them move it with their hands, then have them play with the ball on the ground.
  
4. Body Part Dribble
  - a. Each player has a ball in an area. The coach yells out a body part and the players must move the ball with that body part. Examples include: hands, elbows, shoulders, feet, buttocks, patella (see what they do, it should be the knee).
  - b. Progressions: Introduce the pendulum (passing the ball between the inside of the left foot and the inside of the right foot back and forth) and toe touches (lightly touch the ball with the bottom of the right foot and then the bottom of the left foot, the ball should stay stationary).

## 5. Find the Coach

- a. The Coach has all the children close their eyes and while their eyes are closed the coach moves. On the command, "Find the Coach", the children open their eyes and run to tag the coach. Progress from the coach standing in a single spot to the coach moving even after the children have opened their eyes.

## Games

### 1. Red Light, Green Light

- a. All the players start on a designated line with the coach about 15 yards away. With his back to the players the coach yells green light and the players try to dribble to the coach. When the coach yells red light he waits a moment and then turns his back to face the players. Anyone who is not stopped moving has to go back to where the person farthest away from the coach is.

### 2. Tunnel Soccer

- a. Each player has a ball. The coach has no ball but moves about the field with the players. From time to time the coach stops and spreads his legs to form a tunnel. The players dribble after him and try to shoot through the tunnel whenever he stops. After three shots or so the coach moves on again. Who can score the most points in one minute?
- b. Progressions: The coach specifies how the players must kick the ball (laces, inside of foot).

### 3. Hospital Tag

- a. All players dribble around in a 20 x 20 square. The coach walks around tagging players. If the coach tags a player's arm, the player must hold the tagged arm with the opposite hand. If the coach tags a player's leg, the player has to hold their leg. Lastly, if the coach tags the player's head, the player must go to the hospital to get better. To get better, the player must do 5 toe touches and then returns to the square fully healed.

### 4. Driving My Car

- a. The players are all "driving a car" by dribbling around in a 20 x 20 square. The players make noises like they are a car (vroom...vroom...beep...beep, etc). The coach tells the cars to slow down, speed up, turn (watch out), or hit the brakes (stop the ball).

5. Body Part Dribbling
  - a. All players dribble their ball in a square. When the coach yells out a body part, the players must stop the ball with that body part. Use body parts like: head, elbow, foot, back, knee, etc.
6. Leave It
  - a. All players dribble around in a small square. When the coach yells, "Leave It", all players leave their ball and start dribbling a different ball.
7. Sharks and Minnows
  - a. All players except one (the Minnows) have a ball and are located on an end line. The player without a ball is the Shark. The coach instructs the Minnows to try to get to the other end line without getting tagged by the Shark. Anyone tagged by the Shark becomes a Shark for the next round. This game continues until all players become Sharks.
8. Marbles
  - a. This game takes place in the center circle. Players line up around the center circle with their balls. The coach places a distinctive ball, the marble, in the middle of the center circle. The players attempt to kick their balls at the marble to knock it out of the center circle. Players can not touch the "marble" with their feet. Play continues until the marble is knocked out of the center circle.
9. Everyone's It!
  - a. All players have balls. They dribble around in a small square designated by cones. They try to tag as many other players as possible while trying not to be tagged by other players.

### **Scrimmage**

Use this time to allow the children to simply play soccer. The key objectives are:

1. Have fun
2. Understand which goal is yours
3. Do not use your hands
4. Keep the play active (instead of using goal kicks, corner kicks or side kicks, feel free to roll a ball into play anytime a ball goes out of bounds)
5. Don't forget breaks every 3-5 minutes during scrimmage.

## **Characteristics of the 3-4 year old soccer player**

- Short attention span.
- Can attend to only one problem at a time.
- May understand simple rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated.
- May or may not understand or remember: what lines mean on the field; what team they are on; what goal they are going for. We need to be patient and laugh with them as they get 'lost' on the field.
- Easily bruised psychologically. Shout praise often. Give "hints", don't criticize.
- Need generous praise and to play without pressure. No extrinsic rewards (trophies, medals, etc.) should be given for winning.
- Prefer "parallel play" (Will play on a team, but will not really engage with their teammates. Thus, a 3 against 3 game is, in reality, a 1 against 5 game because they all want the ball at the same time.
- Very individually oriented (me, mine, my).
- Constantly in motion, but, with no sense of pace. They will chase something until they drop. They are easily fatigued but recover rapidly.
- Development for boys and girls are quite similar.
- Physical coordination limited. Eye - hand and eye - foot coordination is not developed. Need to explore qualities of a rolling ball.
- Love to run, jump, roll, hop, etc..
- Catching or throwing skills not developed.
- Can balance on their "good" foot.