

COACHING MICRO SOCCER MANUAL



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FORWARD

This short manual is intended to guide you in your Micro Soccer coaching endeavors. It is clearly not a deep dive into the topic of soccer coaching, but it may have some nuggets of insight for you to glean. There are a million and one ways to coach soccer. The best coaches are those that learn from others, and then form a style and philosophy that fits their own personality. Is there a wrong way to coach? Absolutely! Injuring players emotionally, physically, or mentally has no place in coaching soccer. Remember: More than anything, we want to see our Micro Soccer players having fun! If they learn some serious soccer along the way, well that's just icing on the cake. A greater sign of your coaching success is not to see your 5-year-old player perform a perfect Cruyff turn, but instead to see that same player sign-up for the next Micro Soccer season because they enjoyed being on your team.

Make sure each family receives a copy of this form on Opening Day.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS AND PLAYERS

Welcome to Flagstaff Soccer Club's Micro Soccer Program. Around the world, most children learn to play soccer in the street or in the playground. There are no coaches, no referees, just kids having fun. It is said that the game itself is the best teacher. By playing the game, the children will develop their skills and learn intuitively over time where to position themselves. By not keeping score, we keep the players (and parents) focused on the game and having fun. Micro Soccer is structured to optimize the players' learning by pitting small teams, on small fields, with small soccer balls. Everyone gets a chance to dribble, pass, and shoot for goal.

In order to ensure that everybody enjoys this season of Micro Soccer, please commit to these responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the Parent

- Read all of the information included in your child's Opening Day bag
- Make sure your child arrives at practice and games on time
- Ensure your child is properly dressed in shoes, socks, shin guards, shorts, T-shirt, no jewelry, and a warm jacket, if needed
- Make sure their shoelaces are double knotted
- Have your child bring a #3-sized soccer ball, plenty of water, and sunscreen
- Stay at practice and games whenever possible. If you must leave, make sure you return *before* practice or the game is over
- Inform the coach if your child cannot attend a practice or a game
- Encourage your child and teammates. A good rule of thumb is to cheer *after* something good has happened (e.g. "Nice shot!", "Great block!", etc.)
- Support the coach and leave the actual coaching up to them
- Model good sportsmanship and acknowledge the opponent's goals and good plays
- Be positive and don't let your team's performance change your attitude
- Volunteer to help move goals, provide snacks, or assist the coach
- Above all, let your child be what they are – a child

Responsibilities of the Player

- Bring your soccer gear to practice and games
- Get to practice and games on time (explain this to your parents)
- Try your best
- Have fun!

SOCCER FIRST AID

Unfortunately, players sometimes get hurt playing soccer. Here's some information to keep handy for recognizing and treating injuries that you might encounter on a soccer field.

Heat Stroke vs. Heat Exhaustion

Heat Stroke	Heat Exhaustion
Symptoms: Player is unconscious High body temperature Skin hot, red and dry Pulse is rapid	Symptoms: Weakness, headache, nausea Normal body temperature Skin pale and clammy Profuse sweating
Treatment: Apply cool cloths Seek medical help immediately	Treatment: Apply cool cloths Sip cool water Rest If vomiting, seek medical attention

Head Injury

Symptoms:

Swelling or bleeding may or may not be visible

Treatment:

Apply ice to visible injured area
 Rest player

Monitor closely for:

Behavior changes such as agitation or confusion
 Convulsions or seizures
 Inability to recognize people or places
 Loss of consciousness
 One pupil that is larger than the other
 Slurred speech
 Unusual behavior
 Extreme drowsiness or can't be woken from sleep
 Vomiting
 Crying that can't be consoled

If any of the above occur, seek medical help immediately.

Caution:

After a head injury, coaches too often continue to let players participate if they are not stumbling or incoherent. A better test is to have the player recite four digits backwards or describe the action on the field just before he/she was hurt. They should also be asked to remember four random words, and then asked what the words are five minutes later. A player who fails any of these tests potentially has suffered a concussion and should not return to play until seen by a doctor.

Strain vs. Sprain vs. Cramps

Strain (Muscle Injury)	Sprain (Joint or Ligament Injury)	Cramps (Muscle Contraction)
Symptoms: Pain Swelling Redness	Symptoms: Pain Rapid swelling Heat Discoloration	Symptoms: Pain typically in calves (can also occur in stomach or side)
Treatment: Rest Ice Gradually resume use	Treatment: Rest Ice Compress Elevate	Treatment: Straighten leg and pull toes upward to passively lengthen the cramped muscle Massage muscle Sip cool water

Laceration

Treatment:

Minor

Wash and cover with a protective dressing

Major

Apply direct pressure
 Seek medical attention

Blisters

Prevention:

Wear double socks

Apply petroleum jelly to toes and heel

Treatment:

Do not break the blister

Cover with a protective dressing

Nosebleed

Treatment:

Lean forward and hold the fleshy part of the nose (just below the bone) with firm pressure for 15 minutes without interruption

If bleeding continues, repeat the above interventions for an additional 15 minutes

Do not attempt to clear nostrils of clots for 24 hours

RUNNING PRACTICES

Soccer practice actually starts before your team arrives. Plan what you are going to focus on a day or two before practice day. Get to the field at least 15 minutes early to move the soccer goals in place, place any cones that you want to use during practice, and greet your players that get there early.

You have 60 minutes to run your practice. We are recommending that you work with your team for the first 30 minutes and then let your team and your practice partner team scrimmage for the second half of the hour. Remember: The best teacher of soccer is playing the game. So, what do you do for the first 30 minutes of practice? The United States Soccer Federation has adopted a training model of PLAY-PRACTICE-PLAY.

The first PLAY session begins as your players arrive. Have them scrimmage on a small field (half the size of your regular field). Play 1v1 if only two players are present initially. You may be lucky enough to have 2 standard goals for this initial PLAY session, but if not, use two pinnies or cones to designate the width of a goal. As more players arrive, add them into the mix. Observe the game. Take a mental note of what the players are doing right and what are they doing wrong. Let them play without your interruption. 5 minutes into your allotted practice time, bring your team together in the middle of the field and ask them two specific open-ended questions (not “Yes/No” questions) relating to what your PRACTICE session is going to focus on (e.g. “When you have the ball at your feet but facing your own goal, how can you turn yourself and the ball around so that you can kick the ball towards the correct goal?”). Don’t field answers yet. Tell them to think about the questions as they continue to play. 5 minutes later, bring them together again and have them share the answers to your questions. Pause practice for a 1-minute hydration break and transition to the PRACTICE session.

You may have noticed that there is no warm-up/stretching session at the beginning of practice. It is now thought that stretching exercises are not necessary for young players. Their muscles and ligaments are naturally loose.

You now have 19 minutes to run your PRACTICE session. Pick activities that are fun, include everyone, and don’t take a lot of time to explain. Avoid the dreaded 3 “L”-words: Lines, Laps, and Lectures. Don’t pick activities where the kids have to wait in a line to participate – at this age their attention wanders quickly. Don’t have them run large laps around the field (even if it’s while kicking a soccer ball) – it’s generally boring and doesn’t mimic what happens in a soccer game. Don’t choose an activity that takes 10 minutes to explain when you only have 19 minutes to practice! If you are talking, they are not moving (and we want them to be moving a lot). Your PRACTICE session can have a couple different activities or one activity that becomes progressively more challenging by adding different elements. You can watch some YouTube clips of practice activities on FSC’s Coaching Opportunities website page: <https://www.flagstaffsoccerclub.com/micro-coaching-opportunities>.

In general, you want your PRACTICE activities to have these qualities:

- Organized: All the elements of the activity are ready to go. If the activity needs cones to demark a 20 x 20 yard grid, have those in place before the PRACTICE session. If you need pinnies for the activity, don't have to run back to your car to grab those.
- Game-Like: The activity should mimic (even loosely) some aspect of a soccer game. Good example: a player has the ball, and another player tries to get it away from them. Bad example: practice to see who can kick the ball straight up into to sky the highest.
- Repetitive: Players should have many attempts to succeed in the task at hand. Through repetition players naturally learn what works and what doesn't work. A challenging activity that is repetitive fosters problem-solving – an important quality for a soccer player.
- Challenging: The activity should be appropriately difficult for the age and skill-level of the players. If it's too easy, they will get bored. If it's too difficult, they will get frustrated. Most activities can be modified on the fly if the challenge level is off (e.g. make the practice grid bigger or smaller to make the activity more or less challenging).
- Coached Well: Choose an activity where the players can have the opportunity to participate without your constant input. When you identify an aspect of the activity that is giving the players difficulty, teach them what they could do instead. This instruction can be done 1-on-1 or addressed to the whole team. Try to coach "in the flow" without bringing the entire activity to a halt each time. Make a habit of complimenting play more than criticizing play – especially with this age group.

Pause practice for a 1-minute hydration break and transition to the final PLAY session. This session is the 30 minutes of scrimmage with the other team on the full field. Don't get discouraged if the players don't implement anything from your PRACTICE session into their scrimmage. At this age, developing skills and greater understanding is a slow process. Grade your coaching ability on whether the kids look like they're having fun or not.

FACILITATING GAMES

For Opening Day, you will probably want to have the team assemble 30 minutes before game time to meet the players and their parents. You will also have to have the players change into their soccer uniforms.

Micro Soccer teams play two games each Sunday except for Opening Day. The Games schedule will indicate which field and time your games are held. Most coaches want their players to arrive 15 – 30 minutes before each game. This gives time for families to find the correct field and for coaches to judge how many players will participate in the day's game.

Micro Soccer games are supposed to be fun. Good sportsmanship is expected of players, coaches, and parents. We celebrate every score, and we keep no score.

Coaches on Game Day play many roles:

Equipment Manager: If your team plays the first game of the day, you are in charge of moving one of the goals to your field. The opposing coach has the responsibility for the other goal. This is a good job to delegate to a parent. Do not let the children help move the goals. If your team is playing the last game of the day, you are in charge of stowing one of the goals from your field after the game.

Coach: This includes organizing your team pre-game, ensuring that each player is wearing shin guards, handling all substitutions, and giving guidance and encouragement to your players during the game. When you are coaching, you sit or stand with the players "on the bench".

Referee: You will referee either the first half or the second half. The opposing coach will referee the other half. When you are refereeing, you are on the field moving with the action. Make sure you are familiar with the unique rules of a Micro Soccer game (see below).

Cheerleader: Encourage your team, but also revel in the good plays of the opposing team. Remember this is all for fun. If your team sees you acting angrily when the other team scores, they may become scared, or perhaps worse, emulate your behavior.

Nurse: Sometimes players will fall and skin their knees. Feel free to have an "injured" player spend some time with their mom or dad if the situation calls for it. Sometimes a parental hug is just what the doctor ordered. For more serious injuries, please involve the Micro Soccer Director.

Social Worker: Micro Soccer should be a fun activity for all. Occasionally, a parent or grandparent can demonstrate inappropriate behavior (e.g. chastising, belittling, cursing, arguing, etc.). This behavior may be directed at their own child, a player on the other team, another parent, or a coach. Coaches are part of the Micro Soccer organization and are given authorization to address such issues. The goal is to deescalate the situation while bringing about change in the behavior of the offending party. If you feel uncomfortable confronting the situation, please involve the Micro Soccer Director.

Micro Soccer Modifications to The Laws of The Game

Law 1: The field size is 30 x 20 yards. There are no penalty areas, goal areas, or corner arcs. The center circle radius measures 6 yards. Goals measure 6 feet wide by 4 feet tall.

Law 2: The ball is size #3.

Law 3: Each team fields 4 players. There are no goalkeepers. A player cannot be permanently positioned in front of their own goal – thus playing a de facto goalkeeper. Unlimited substitutions are allowed.

Law 5: A coach will referee the first half; the opposing coach will referee the second half.

Law 6: There are no assistant referees or other officials.

Law 7: The match has two 10-minute halves separated by a 5-minute halftime. There is no allowance for time lost except for perhaps an extraordinary situation.

Law 9: The ball is still in play if it touches the referee.

Law 10: The score is not kept in Micro Soccer.

Law 11: There is no offside rule.

Law 12: Slide tackling is a foul. Intentional and unintentional heading of the ball is a foul. All free kicks are indirect kicks. Yellow and red cards are not awarded.

Law 13: The opponents must stand at least 4 yards from the spot of the free kick.

Law 14: There are no penalty kicks.

Law 15: In place of throw-ins, the ball is placed on or near the touchline where the ball exited the field and kicked into play. The opponents must stand at least 4 yards from the spot of the kick-in.

Law 16: Goal kicks are taken within 4 yards of the goal. Opponents must stand on their half of the field during a goal kick.

Law 17: In place of corner kicks, the ball is placed on or near the goal line where the ball exited the field and kicked into play. If the ball exited the field within 4 yards of the goal, the ball is moved to a spot on the goal line 4 yards from the goal. The opponents must stand at least 4 yards from the spot of the kick-in.

Over-coaching: Try to resist the urge

By Dave Simeone

Most of the sports that are currently predominant in our culture involve the coach as an active participant. Although the coach is along the touch line, in the coaching box or on the bench, the opportunity for being overly involved with the players constantly exists. These opportunities are aside from the usual timeouts or substitutions. These typical stoppages in play already contribute to many sports being coach-oriented rather than player-oriented. Combine the standard loud encouragement (i.e., screaming and yelling) with animated cheerleading and you have an excess of over-coaching.

Soccer is different than most sports. The involvement of the coach is secondary to those participating in the game — the players. While coach-oriented activities (basketball, baseball, American football) demand, and allow for, a high degree of involvement by the coach during competitive games, soccer is different. It would be more appropriate to contend that soccer coaches do their work and prepare their teams during the week. By the time it comes to the game on Saturday morning it is up to the participants to act, make decisions and play!

It is essential that the youth soccer coach understand his/her role. If continuous over-involvement during the game is not the best way to assist the players then the coach has a responsibility to alter his/her behavior and learn to take a different approach.

Sports such as baseball and American football are what we would refer to as "setup" sports. Between pitches (baseball) or plays (American football) time and opportunity exist for diagrams to be drawn or the coach to reposition an outfielder. Soccer does not allow for similar stoppages since play is continuous and fairly uninterrupted. Players must be allowed, and ultimately enabled, to think and make decisions on their own. They must learn to solve problems during the game.

This self-sufficient type of thinking necessitates that players learn from the game and utilize any and all information that they receive and process toward finding solutions to the problems they encounter.

The games that youngsters play on Saturday mornings in their local leagues and associations should be viewed as a vehicle for learning. The same is true concerning their one or two days a week in practice. The acquisition of playing ability is a long-term process that begins at the age of 5 or 6. It is unrealistic to expect youngsters at 10 or 11 years of age, and younger, to have an adult perspective on the game. Because of their maturity level youngsters are learning about the broadest parameters of play. They are at a stage where development is the priority since the acquisition of skill, elementary decision-making and an appreciation and passion for soccer are sounded.

Young players learn from, and are a product of, their experiences. They learn more from their experiences (games, activities, the environment) than they do from the coach. The role of the coach is to then organize and set up games and activities that the players enjoy and benefit from.

Unfortunately, the majority of over coaching occurs with youngsters who are between the ages of 5 to 11. It occurs, in part, because of the "profile" of the average parent/coach. Generally he/she brings little practical soccer experience. At the same time the coach is learning about soccer he/she is learning about coaching.

The availability of coaching education throughout national (NSCAA, U.S. Soccer), regional and state associations, combined with the information that is presented in the courses, simplifies coaching. Once youth coaches are exposed to this information they can assume their role with greater effectiveness.

While coaches are somewhat responsible to educate the parents of their players, parents in turn should evaluate the effectiveness of the coach: Is my

child learning to play soccer or is the coach preoccupied with drills that only permit the players to play at soccer? Parents should evaluate the demeanor and approach the coach takes towards games: Is the coach willing to allow youngsters to play the game for themselves or is he/she absorbed with his/her active, but unnecessary, participation? Is the coach most concerned with making decisions for the players rather than accepting that the players must make decisions on their own?

Overall, there should be uniform agreement and understanding between the parents, coaches and league or association administrators on this matter. This shared responsibility helps ensure that play remains a leisure activity with a long-term interest of player development. Remember, play is a key word in player development.

Editor's note: Dave Simeone is the director of coaching for the North Texas YSA and a frequent contributor to Soccer Journal. He also serves on the NSCAA Board of Directors as the youth boys representative.

Are you over-coaching?

Take this test

Take some time to evaluate whether you might be over-coaching by answering the following:

- ? Do you find that you are hoarse and your voice is strained following a game?
- ? Is the information that you give your players during halftime emotional but non-specific in terms of assisting them to solve the problems they encounter? (“Try harder! Run faster!”)
- ? Do you utilize catch phrases such as “suck it up, boys” or “no pain, no gain” in attempting to motivate youngsters?
- ? Do you find that you are sweating and running just as much during the game as the players?
- ? Are your pre-game, half-time or post-game speeches similar to the president’s State of the Union address?
- ? In addressing the players do you ramble and cause the players to wonder “What’s the point?”
- ? Are your remarks and instructions made during the game and to players repetitive and redundant? Is this information general, nonspecific jargon and cheerleading that has little impact on players’ performances?
- ? Are you reluctant to allow players to make their own decisions during a game? Are you constantly barraging players with instructions during the game?
- ? Do you coach in absolutes such as always or never?
- ? Do you choreograph and arrange players into strict positions with instructions such as “Never go out of your zone” or “Defenders never cross midfield”?
- ? Have you instructed players to refrain from passing the ball to certain teammates because their present level of ability is, from your adult perspective, inadequate?
- ? Do you spend an excessive amount of time in practice on throw-ins, kick-offs, corner kicks or penalty kicks?
- ? Are you utilizing methods of training that do not allow for players to acquire and improve technical skill, tactical decision-making, physical stamina and confidence? (i.e., dribbling through cones, standing in lines awaiting a turn)
- ? Are your practices static? Do your practices produce the same degree of movement/stimulation as a soccer game?
- ? Are you attempting to improve the team’s level of fitness by minimizing the time the players have contact with the ball? Do you view the game as a contest based only on fitness that leads to a preoccupation with running?
- ? Are you openly emotional or upset when addressing the players to the point that they stare at you while thinking what is he/she so disturbed about?
- ? As the coach, do you have difficulty accepting a realistic approach to winning and losing? Do you believe that winning is synonymous with player development?
- ? Do you enjoy and have fun coaching youngsters? Are you consistently aggravated and apprehensive about coaching?

How to Make Competition Work for Your Child

By Kathryn Kvols

We live in a highly competitive society. Competition has some virtues and some pitfalls. The virtues are that competition helps us to strive to be better, to do more than we thought we were capable of doing. Competition helps us not to be complacent with where we already are.

The pitfalls parents should be aware of when they allow their child to participate in competitive events are:

- Competition often breeds conflict. Hurt feelings, jealousy, arguments and alienation among peers are often the result of competition.
- Your child may compare himself to others. The need to be better than others can put distance in peer relationships. If he comes up short in the comparison, he may feel like quitting.
- In an effort to be #1, children often withhold knowledge, assistance and encouragement from their classmates. As a result, the larger group loses out on valuable contributions.
- Who wins and who loses is often the major emphasis in competition. It feels great to win but there is always a loser and there will always be someone better than your child.
- Needing to be the best or needing to win can put unnecessary pressure on your child.

How do we protect our children from falling prey to the trappings and pitfalls of competition yet be able to function effectively in the midst of it? We may not be able to spare our children from the negative consequences of competition, but we can help minimize their effects by giving our children a different perspective on competition. Here are some questions you may want to ask your child after competing:

“Did you give it your best?” This puts the emphasis on personal growth rather than defeating the opponent.

“What skill did you implement from your practice?”

“Who did you help?” or “How did you help the team?” Sometimes children feel like they have to win or be the best in order to be important or valuable. This question helps them recognize that they can be valuable and contribute in many different ways.

“What did you learn?” This puts the emphasis on the process rather than on the result. All too often we concentrate on the results and make ourselves miserable during the process.

“Did you have fun?” instead of “Did you win?” This question will help your child focus on the “joy of doing” instead of the “joy of outdoing.”

My husband has an academy where he teaches fencing. He encourages his students to practice the following before going into a match. Tell your opponent “good luck”. Say to yourself, “I wish you (the opponent) your best performance, so that I can have the best possible challenge. May we both get stronger from the result of this match.”

Ask your child questions that cause self-reflection. This causes your child to look internally. As a result, he will begin to know himself and become driven from within instead of being driven by striving to be the best or by needing to win.

Kathryn Kvols is the author of the best-selling book and parenting course, "Redirecting Children's Behavior." She is an international speaker and the president of the International Network for Children and Families.