



## IAFC UNDER 5 AND UNDER 6 PRACTICE STRUCTURE

Young players need to learn to dribble within a variety of playing situations. Dribbling forward unopposed, changing speed and direction, shielding the ball from opponents, dribbling past an opponent and using dribbling to get away from pressure. The ability to dribble is absolutely critical since dribbling is the foundation and preparation for progressing into the other fundamental skills of soccer; such as controlling the ball (possessing), shooting (striking the ball) and passing. Players are learning how to combine body control, agility (education movement), coordination and balance with the technical aspect of dribbling. This process of learning to dribble is trial and error or in the soccer world known as Ball Mastery! Over time, players will discover the contrast between a “soft” touch, a “hard” touch on the ball and will develop a “feel” for the ball providing them the basis to develop new skills.

### CHARACTERISTICS

#### Technical:

- Every player should have a ball
- The focus is on dribbling the ball in a variety of situations
- Basic motor skills should be developed with and without the ball
- No heading what-so-ever
- Players should get as many touches on the ball as possible in a session
- Involve the ball in as many activities as possible
- Striking the ball (for this age division, “big touch”
- No ELIMINATION GAMES – All players are engaged

#### Tactical:

- No tactics taught as many players understand themselves and the ball
- Positional coaching of any kind is irrelevant and detrimental to their fun, enjoyment and progress
- Directional Focus: One way – Attack (Score) and Defend (stop the ball)

#### Physical:

- Development of boys and girls are quite similar
- Constantly in motion with no sense of pace. Will chase something until they drop. Easily fatigued but recover rapidly (frequent brief breaks)
- Love to run, jump, hop...etc.
- Catching, throwing, kicking skills not yet developed
- Eye-hand and eye-foot coordination not developed

#### Psychological:

- Short attention span: Research shows you will get 23-minutes of focus in this age group in a 60-minute session.
- Only go in one direction
- May or may not understand/remember: What lines on field mean on the field, what team they are on or what goal they are scoring in.
- Most are very egocentric (me, mine, my stage). Do not share the ball, think they won't get it back
- Prefer “parallel play”, will play on a team but may not engage with their teammates
- Easily bruised psychologically. Shout praise, Ask them questions and don't criticize

#### Under 6 Practice Structure:

- Select 4 or 5 activities from the U5/U6 Practice Activities Curriculum
- Be prepared to change activities if one is not working out
- Always end with a small sided game (scrimmage, multiple goal game)
- Each activity should last between 8-12 minutes with a 1-2 Minute water break after each.
- Dribbling/Ball Mastery is the main focus with shooting (Striking the ball) as the second objective.
- Individual activities (1 player, 1 ball)