



## Lyme/Old Lyme Soccer Club Player Development Guidelines

The purpose of this curriculum is to help standardize “best practice” soccer training throughout the club. Through licensure courses, clinics, and ongoing support of towns and clubs, The Connecticut Junior Soccer Association (CJSA) and Southeastern CT Jr. Soccer Association (SECJSA) work to educate as many coaches as possible. However, the coaching population is constantly changing and we believe that we need to do more to connect with coaches on a consistent basis. This curriculum will serve as a bridge for those connections in order to develop coaching consistency within age groups and a developmental progression across age groups. The curriculum can stand on its own to guide all coaches as to what is best for developing players. At the same time, coaches should utilize the advice of more experienced coaches whenever needed. Please understand that every child varies in their development and these are strictly guidelines. Guidelines are meant to be flexible as all players of the same age are certainly not at the same developmental level. It is important we challenge all players at a level that befits their ability. The information in this document comes not only from the club, but from the National Director of Coaching, The National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) and other National Staff Coaches. The U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF) Player Development Guidelines, U.S. Youth Soccer’s Small Sided Games Manual, and the Massachusetts State Curriculum were primary sources for this document. The information is not solely based on observation and experience in soccer, but also on research and practice in psychology, child development, physiology, child education, and learning theory. We hope all coaches will use this curriculum to guide their coaching and to help insure our players are being provided the best soccer environment possible. The CJSA, USSF and NSCAA offer educational programs to help coaches improve their knowledge of the game. Any coaches desiring to take a coaching course offered by the CJSA, USSF or NSCAA will be reimbursed for the cost of that course by the club.

## **Table of Contents**

<u>General Philosophy.....</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Under 6 Curriculum.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Under 8 Curriculum.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Under 10 Curriculum.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Under 12 Curriculum.....</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Under 14 Curriculum.....</u>	<u>20</u>

## GENERAL PHILOSOPHY

There is not just “one way” to teach soccer to players, nor is there just one style of coaching. There is a broad spectrum of styles and methods for how each of us experiences the game. Some of this comes from our backgrounds, while some of this also is the product of our own personalities. At the youth and junior levels, however, there is a set of fundamental principles that must be considered by anyone involved with soccer. In general, *young soccer players require a certain amount of uninterrupted play. This allows them to experience soccer first hand. They should be allowed the opportunity to experiment, and with that, succeed and fail.*

The coach’s long term goal is to prepare the player to successfully recognize and solve the challenges of the game on his or her own. It is vital that the coach approaches soccer with this in mind.

Remember, the game is fun. Set up practices that are age appropriate and emphasize the fun of the game. Keep the game, and practices, player-centered, and not coach-centered, and allow the game to be the teacher. Have 1 ball per player at all practices. That will allow the players a maximum number of touches at the session. Prior to U-14, encourage creativity and ball skills before tactics. Don’t be overly concerned about positional play until the U-14 level, rather, encourage free flow creative play. For the U-10 and U-12 levels, positional play should be introduced and practiced, but as secondary to developing good creativity and ball handling skills. All players should attack and all players should defend, at the appropriate times, regardless of their assigned position on the field. Tactics only really enter the scene at the U-14 level. That is not to say that no tactics should be introduced for 8 – 11 year olds, but keep it to a minimum. Allow the players to concentrate on developing their relationship with the ball.

The game is a game for the players. During matches, allow them to play the game and avoid coaching play to play from the sidelines. Speak to the players that are not currently in the game and point out things to them, and coach during practice. Focus on team communications during all training sessions. This is a big part of how well a team plays together. During games, allow the players on the field to make their own decisions on the field, as they communicate with one another. This is an important part of their development.

Finally a few notes on “playing up”. In general, it is best for players to compete against players of their own age group. Occasionally, a player of exceptional ability comes along who is in need of a greater challenge. If a player and their parent request that a player play at a level above their age group it is the coaching staff’s responsibility to determine whether that is in the best interest of the player. In most cases, unless the player is good enough to be a regular starter and important contributor to the “A” team at the next level, they should play at their age appropriate level.

Have fun!

## LYME/OLD LYME SOCCER CLUB U-6 CURRICULUM

Qualities of the coach at this level – Patience, good humor, and a willingness to see the world through a child’s eyes. Also, the ability to speak their language and accept that the children’s play will not look at all like soccer is necessary.

Coaching License recommended – USSF Youth Module or NSCAA Parent Coach Diploma

At these young ages, the primary goal is to make the player’s experience with soccer so enjoyable that when he or she has a choice of activities, he or she choose to play soccer on his or her own.

<u>AgeGroup</u>	<u>Skill Priorities</u>
U-6 (K and 1 <sup>st</sup> graders)	<b>Dribble with all sides of both feet</b> <b>Dribble out of trouble</b> <b>Dribble past someone</b> <b>Soft first touch</b>

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 that 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

Some Recommended Games for U6 Players:

**1) Tag---** (Objective: develop dribbling skills) Every child dribbles a soccer ball in the space defined while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing twice in a row, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game. *Version 2:* Players must tag other players on their knees.

**Coaching Points:** Look for players to dribble with both feet, using a soft touch to keep the ball under control. Encourage players to keep their head up to find teammates.

**2) Hospital tag---**(Objective: develop dribbling skills) Same as tag in that each player dribbles a soccer ball and that they try to tag each other with their hands. In this game, each time a player is tagged he/she must place their hand on the spot on their body at which they were tagged. Obviously, if tagged a third time, players have no more hands to cover those spots, so they must go to the hospital to see the doctor. The coach acts as the doctor and performs a magical task (pretend) to heal all the little soccer players so they can continue playing the game.

**Coaching Points:** Look for players to dribble with both feet, using a soft touch to keep the ball under control. Encourage players to keep their head up to find teammates.

**3) Red light/Green light---**(Objective: changing speed and directions to avoid opponents) All players have a ball and dribble in a limited space (or towards the coach). When coach says “red light”, players must stop ball and put foot on top of ball. When coach says “yellow light”, players must dribble very slowly. When coach says “green light”, players dribble fast. Coach controls this game with frequency of light changes and variety of changes. Once players catch on to this game, add light of other colors and affix different actions to them. (i.e. purple light = hop back and forth over ball, orange light = run around the ball, black light = dance, blue light = hide behind the ball etc. etc.) **Coaching Points:** slow and fast dribbling should have a significant speed difference. Can change this game slightly so that instead of calling out colors, hold up a colored card or scrimmage vest and players must see it and respond. This will help develop their ability to keep their heads up while dribbling.

**4) Freeze Tag---**(Objective – Dribbling skills, dribble away from trouble) Break up the group into two teams. Everyone must dribble their soccer ball, but one team tries to tag (freeze) the other team. If they do tag a player on the other team, that player must freeze, place their ball above their head and spread their legs. Another player on their team must kick his/her ball through the frozen player’s legs to unfreeze the teammate. If all players are frozen, game ends and the frozen team becomes the taggers. Otherwise, stop game after a few minutes and have team reverse roles. *Version 2:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion.

**Coaching Points:** Stress dribbling with both sides of both feet, keeping their heads up to see both teammates in need of unfreezing and opponents attempting to tag.

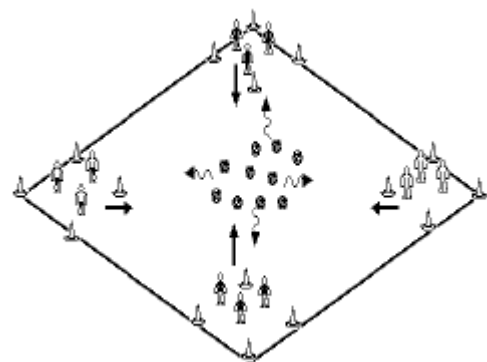
**5) Planets---**(Objective – Dribbling) Set up cones into multiple squares or triangles that serve as planets (or cities). All players must follow coach’s order and dribble into the planet he calls out. Coach can have all players follow same directions or break up team so they start at different planet and then have them dribble through the solar system in clockwise or counterclockwise fashion. Coach can have groups dribble in opposite direction through the solar system. **Coaching Points:** Keep control of ball using soft touches, keep head up to avoid colliding with teammates and see the field.

**6) Kangaroo Jack---**(Objective – Dribbling out of trouble) All players except two or three begin with a ball. Players without balls are kangaroo jacks and must hop like a kangaroo and try to tag players. If a player gets tagged, he/she becomes a kangaroo as well until all players are turned into kangaroos. **Coaching Points:** Keep head up in order to see and avoid kangaroos, and avoid collisions with teammates.

**7) Snake---**(Objective – Dribbling out of trouble) In an appropriate space for the numbers you have, have all players dribbling soccer balls except for 2-3 players to start. These players hold hands and work together as one snake to tag the other players, The players with balls try to avoid getting tagged by the snake. If they are tagged, the join hands with players making up the snake the snake grows until all players are part of the snake. The snake must stay together as one animal and not break off into little parts. Encourage fun by having the snake hiss. **Coaching Points:** Keep head up in order to see and avoid kangaroos, and avoid collisions with teammates.

**8) Ball Tag---**(Objective – passing) Similar to other tag games except players try to tag others with their soccer ball instead of their hand. Have them keep count of how many times they kick their soccer ball and tag another person. Have the tag count if their ball hits another player or that player’s ball. Can have the players tag the coach for 10 or 20 points. Then can have players tag other selected players for 50 or 100 points etc. etc. *Version 2:* Rather than having players tag each other, have them tag the coach by kicking their soccer ball. The coach moves around without a ball to avoid being tagged. Have players count up how many they got and can do the same variations as in the other game by affixing a lot of points to players. **Coaching Points:** Pass with the inside of the foot for best control, pass to where you teammate is going not to where they are.

**9) Capture the Balls---**(Objective – Dribbling in traffic) Set up three or four “home bases” (squares) with cones roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break up the players into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coaches command the teams are free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home



bases. Teams can steal balls from each others' home bases. Coach calls time and counts up how many balls are in each space to determine a winner. Coach allows team 1 minute to make up a new team strategy before playing again. **Coaching Points:** Keep the ball close and under control with a soft touch in order to move quickly and not lose possession.

**10) Moving Goal---**(Objective – kicking for accuracy) 2 coaches use a pinnie or an extra piece of clothing to form a movable goal with each coach serving as a post and the shirt serving as the crossbar. Players each have a ball and try to score by kicking their ball through the goal. However, the coaches constantly move and turn to force the players to keep their head up and to change direction as they dribble. **Coaching Points:** Pass with the inside of the foot for accuracy or shoot with the instep for a little more power. Keep head up to find the moving goal.

\*\*\*\*\* Every practice should include a scrimmage\*\*\*\*\*

### **LOLSC RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Game Form:** 3 vs 3 (without a goalkeeper)\

**Roster size:** 8 – 10 players

**Field Size:** 20 to 30 yds long X 15 to 20 yds wide

**Goal Size:** 6 ft. x 18 ft

**Duration of Practice:** 45 to 60 minutes one time per week during the fall season.

**Ball size:** 3

No offside rule.

Players should not be limited to playing one “position”, but be rotated throughout the season so as to get experience everywhere.

When the ball goes out of bounds, game is restarted with a kick-in or dribble-in. No throw ins.

No organized matches should be played at this age. Playing with and against their teammates during practice is enough and should be encouraged.

There should be no consequences for players missing games or practices. They should be choosing to play, not being coerced to do so.

## **LYME/OLD LYME SOCCER CLUB U-8 CURRICULUM**

Qualities of the coach at this level – This coach must clearly understand the capabilities and limitations of this age and appreciate the power of learning by watching. He or she must have the ability to demonstrate or to use older players to demonstrate.

Coaching License recommended – USSF Youth Module or NSCAA Parent Coach Diploma

<b><u>AgeGroup</u></b>	<b><u>Skill Priorities</u></b>
<b>U-8 (1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> graders)</b>	<b>Dribble with all sides of both feet</b> <b>Dribble out of trouble</b> <b>Dribble past someone</b> <b>Shielding</b> <b>Soft first touch</b> <b>Introduce proper shooting technique</b> <b>Introduce passing</b>

Although U8 children may begin to be far more physically and maturationally advanced than U6 children, we must remain patient and not try to force them to develop too quickly. Dribbling still needs 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. Similar to the U6 children, we need 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.

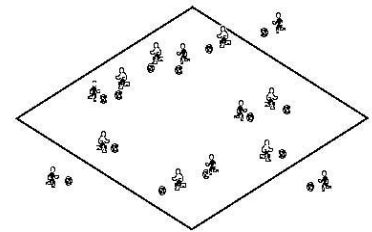
### *Typical Characteristics of U8 Players*

- *tend to play well in pairs* – unlike 6 year-olds, these children enjoy playing 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 other's are feeling
- *still unable to think abstractly* – still do not have this capability, be patient
- *heating and cooling system still less efficient than adults* – still make sure to give frequent water breaks
- *still much prefer playing to watching* – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines
- *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
- *have an understanding of time and sequence* – 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
- *extremely aware of adult reactions* – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they look for your reaction frequently

- *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 try new things at this age
- *begin to become 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 to is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player
- *some will keep score* – the competitive motors churn faster in some than others. Surely some parents are fueling the motors with their own. Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age. Results should not be important at this age
- *beginning to develop motor memories* – by attempting 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-olds allowed 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.

#### Some Recommended Games for U8 Players:

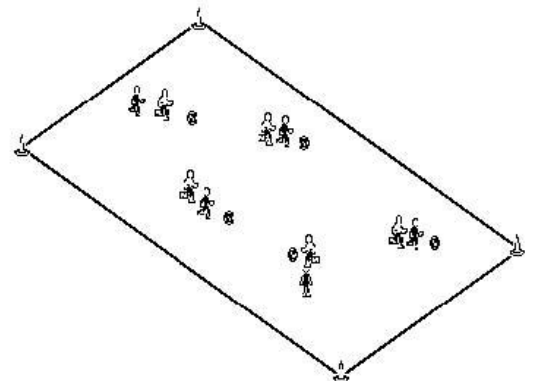
1) Free Dribble---(Objective – Dribbling Skills) Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. Version 2: As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.



**Coaching Points:** Insure players use inside and outside of both feet and keep their head up to see what is happening around them and avoid collisions. Change of speed and direction must be quick in order to fool opponents.

2) Knock Out---(Objective – Dribbling out of trouble and around opponents) In same space as previous activity, have players dribble balls while trying to knock other player's balls outside of the grid. Players can never leave their own ball. If their ball gets knocked out have them retrieve it quickly and get back into the game. (You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times). **Coaching Points:** Use inside and outside of both feet, keeping head up. Use shielding techniques to protect ball from opponents if players have been taught those skills.

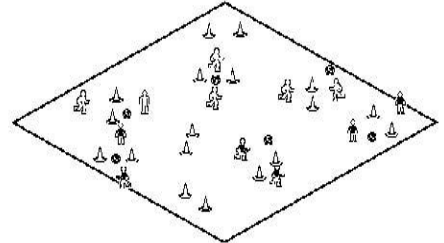
3) Shield-Steal---(Objective – shielding) Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the



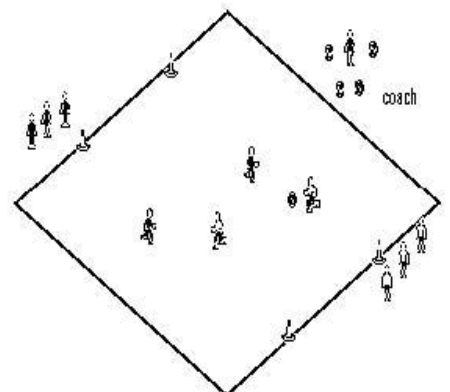
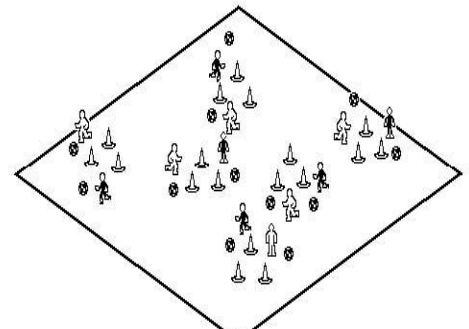
technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield. **Coaching Points:** Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going.

**4) Marbles---**(Objective – Passing and shooting techniques) Players are in pairs, each with a ball. This time instead of chasing each other, one player plays out his ball and the partner passes his own ball in an attempt to strike the ball his partner played out. Players should keep track of how many times they hit their partner’s ball. *Version 2:* Once players understand this game, make it fast paced by having the players take turns at trying to hit each other’s ball without ever stopping. If player 2 misses player 1’s ball, then player 1 immediately runs to his own ball and tries to hit player 2’s ball (player 2 does not get to touch his ball after missing player 1’s ball). After player 1 has a chance, then player 2 immediately tries to hit player 1’s ball right back. etc. etc. This game is continuous and players should keep score. *Hint:* If 2 balls are very close to each other a player should kick their ball hard at the other ball so when they hit it, it is more difficult for the other to hit their ball back. **Coaching Points:** Pass the ball for accuracy using the inside of the foot. (Foot turned at right angle to the direction of the pass, non-kicking foot adjacent to the ball and pointing toward the intended target). For more power, use proper shooting technique and strike the ball with the instep. (Toe down, knee over the ball, non-kicking foot adjacent to and slightly behind kicking foot, keep body over the ball)

**5) Gates Passing---**(Objective – Passing) Players are paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Have players pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot. **Coaching Points:** Avoid passing with the toe and pass with the flat parts of the foot, i.e. instep, inside, outside.)



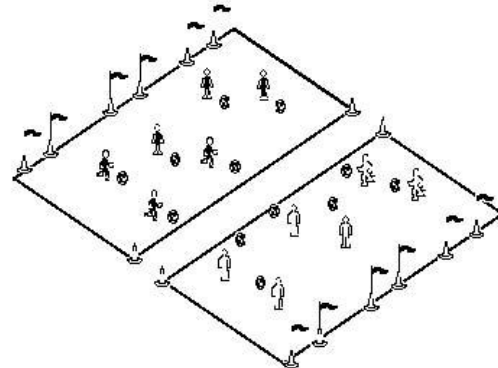
**6) Triangle Tag---**(Objective – Passing) Set up cones in a triangle formation with each side of the triangle being roughly 1 yard long. Every triangle has a pair of players, each with a ball. Similar to the tag game, one player is being chased and one is “it”. However this time the player who is “it” tags the player by kicking her ball and hitting the other player’s ball or hitting the player below the knee. Players can dribble in either direction around the triangle and must stay close to their own triangle. Neither player can go through the triangle. *Version 2:* Allow the player being chased to go through the triangle. When in the triangle she is safe. However, after going through triangle, player must go completely around triangle before she can go through triangle again. She cannot stop inside the triangle. *Version 3:* Allow pairs to move from triangle to triangle (incorporates speed dribbling and traffic). If two pairs are at the same triangle at the same time that is fine, but players



still only compete with their partner. Note: To increase difficulty, do not count hitting a player below the knee as a tag. **Coaching Points:** Avoid passing with the toe and pass with the flat parts of the foot, i.e. instep, inside, outside.)

**7) Get Outta Here---**(Objective – Dribbling Past someone) Place two small (2 yard) goals at the end of a field 15 x 10 yards. Place half of team behind each goal and coach stands at halfway line with all balls. When coach plays out a ball the first two players run out and try to score on each other's goal. If the ball goes in the goal or out of bounds, the coach yells "get outta here" and plays in a new ball immediately for the next two players. *Version 2:* Coach can stop yelling "get outta here" after a while and see if players recognize when balls go out and are attentive. *Version 3:* Coach can vary service of ball. Sometimes play it to one player, sometimes toss the ball up in the air. *Version 4:* Have the first two or three players from each group come out each time a new ball is played and play 2 vs. 2 or 3 vs. 3. **Coaching Points:** Keep the ball close to the body with soft touches. Shield the ball with your body as you pass an opponent.

**8) Clean Your Backyard---** (Objective – Shooting technique) Break group into two teams and have each team stay only on their half of the field. Place a 6 yard buffer zone between halves that no one can enter or cross. Each player needs a ball. Place three small (2-3yd) goals at the far end of each side of the field. Have both teams shoot balls at other team's goals in an attempt to score through anyone of the small goals (below knee height). Players cannot cross the buffer zone or go into the other half. Balls get recycled naturally in the game. This is a competition and teams need to keep score. Play 2 or 3 games and have teams re-strategize between each game. Teams can play defense though no hands. Only shots with laces count as goals. **Coaching Points:** Strike the ball with the laces (instep), keep the toe down, , knee over the ball, non-kicking foot adjacent to and slightly behind kicking foot, keep body over the ball.



**9) 2 vs. 1 keepaway---**(Objective – Combination Play, Transition) In a grid 10x15 yds, three players play 2 vs. 1 continuous keepaway. Two attackers combine to keep the ball away from one defender. When the defender wins the ball, he or she immediately combines with the attacker he or she did not win the ball from and the attacker who lost the ball becomes the defender. Balls out of play are dribbled in or passed in. **Coaching Points:** 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker must find good support position in an open space, where their teammate can complete a pass. Player losing the ball must transition quickly to defensive role as 1<sup>st</sup> defender.

**10) 1 vs. 1 to Endlines---**(Objective – Dribbling the ball away from pressure) In a space that is wider than long (15 x 20 yds) each player defends one endline and attacks the other. Players score by dribbling the ball in control over the opposing player's endline. *Version 2:* You can make this 2 vs. 2, 3 vs. 3 or 4 vs. 4. **Coaching Points:** The field is wide – take the ball away from pressure with unexpected speed/direction changes and shielding the ball using the body)

\*\*\*\*\* Every practice should include a scrimmage\*\*\*\*\*

**LOLSC RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Game form:** 4 vs 4 or 5 v 5 (*no goalkeeper*)

**Roster size:** 7 to 9 players

**Field Size:** 35 to 40 yds long X 25 to 30 yds wide

**Goal Size:** 6 ft. x 18 ft

**Ball:** #3

**Duration of Practice:** 60 to 90 minutes one time per week during the fall season.

No offside rule

Players should not be limited to playing one “position”, but be rotated throughout the season so as to get experience everywhere.

Informal matches against another team during the last half of the training session are appropriate. No scores or standings should be kept.

There should be no consequences for players missing games or practices. They should be choosing to play, not being coerced to do so.

## LYME/OLD LYME SOCCER CLUB U-10 CURRICULUM

Qualities of the coach at this level – This coach must be energetic. The effective coach plays while facilitating practice, stimulating ideas in the players.

Coaching License recommended - USSF Youth Module or NSCAA State Diploma

<u>AgeGroup</u>	<u>Skill Priorities</u>
U-10 (3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> graders)	<b>Continue with dribbling foci from U8 Passing with inside and outside of both feet.</b> <b>Shooting with both feet---using laces Receiving the ball with all parts of body</b> <b>Heading</b>
	<b><u>Tactical Priorities</u></b> <b>Basic Attacking Ideas</b> <b>Basic Defending Ideas</b> <b>Comprehend 1 vs 1 concepts</b> <b>Comprehend 2 vs 1 concepts</b> <b>Introduction to 2 vs 2 concepts</b> <b>Comprehend roles of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> defenders</b> <b>Comprehend roles of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> attackers</b>

As we move up the age ladder from the U8 level to the U10 level there are many differences we must attend to in order to provide an optimal experience for young players of this age. However, there are also many similarities. Just as in parenting, it is important to be consistent in coaching and we must make sure that we follow a progressive trend of development for young players. To this end, we need to continue to focus on technique during our practices, as we did at the younger ages. Tactics and positional play are just being introduced at this level. The goal should be to have the players aware enough of their teammates that they don't get in one another's way on the field and to start to understand the concept of trying to place themselves in good support positions, although they may not understand where those support positions are just yet. Creating environments in which players get maximum repetitions of technical skills, though is still key. Players at this age should still work on ball mastery and demonstrate growing familiarity and comfort with a ball at their feet

At this age, it is recommended that parents discourage their children from specializing in or playing only soccer and encourage participation in a variety of different sports and activities.

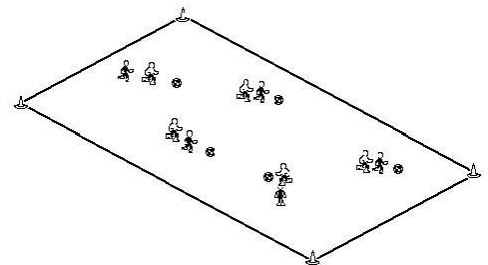
Typical Characteristics of U10 Players

- *attention span lengthens from U8---they start to show the ability to sequence thought and actions*
- *they start to think ahead and think "If this, then that"*

- *they are more inclined towards wanting to play soccer rather than being told to play*
- *demonstrate increased self-responsibility – bringing a ball, water and all gear should now be their complete responsibility*
- *they start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts*
- *children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure*
- *players greatly affiliate with their team or their coach —“I play for the Tigers” or “I play for coach Amy’s team”*
- *players at this age are extremely rule bound—remember each rule you create is the equivalent of a bar in the prison in which you would like to live*
- *there is a wide continuum of maturity evident on most teams.*
- *this is still a crucial age for technical skill development*

### Some Recommended Games for U10 Players:

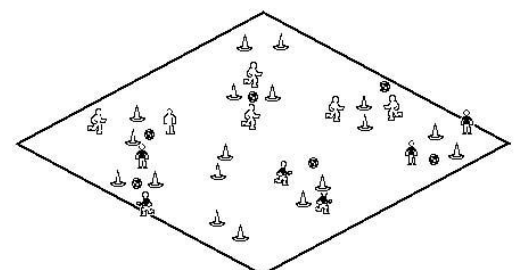
1) Free Dribble---(Objective – Dribbling Skills) Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. Version 2: As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction. Version 3: Make the game a knockout game in which players try to knock each other’s balls out of the grid while maintaining possession of their own. Note: You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times.



You do not want players sitting out. **Coaching Points:** Insure players use inside and outside of both feet and keep their head up to see what is happening around them and avoid collisions. Change of speed and direction must be quick in order to fool opponents.

2) Shield-Steal---(Objective – Shielding) Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield. . **Coaching Points:** Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going.

3) Gates Passing---(Objective – Passing) Same set up as previous game. However players are now paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Again, players try to accumulate as many points as



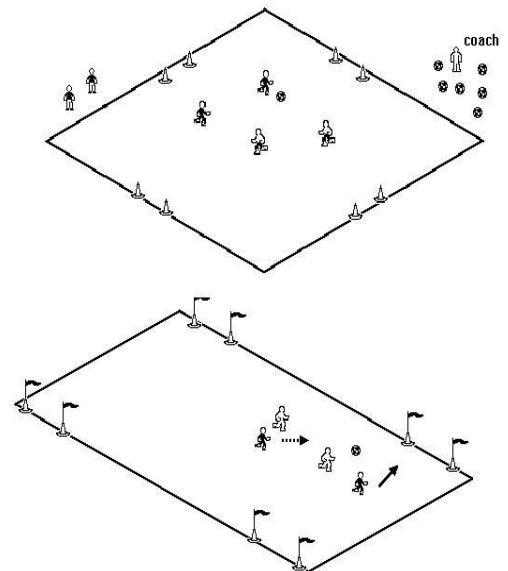
possible in the time allotted. Similar to previous game, have them pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot. **Coaching Points:** Avoid passing with the toe and pass with the flat parts of the foot, i.e. instep, inside, outside.)

4) 1 vs. 1 To lines---(Objective – Dribbling, shielding, 1<sup>st</sup> defender responsibilities) In a grid 10x10 yards, players line up on opposite sides. The first player in each line alternates attacking the player opposite them. When the attacker dribbles over the line they score a goal. If the defender wins the ball he or she can counter attack to the opposite line to also score a goal. The players switch to the opposite line if a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other. *Version 2:* Make the grid larger and make this a 2 vs. 2 or a 3 vs. 3 game. **Coaching Points:** Remind attackers to keep the ball close with a soft touch and to shield the ball as the attempt to penetrate. Remind defenders that as first defender, they should primarily pressure to prevent penetration, waiting for the attacker to make a mistake before they attempt to steal the ball.

5) 1 vs. 1 To Two Small Goals---(Objective – Dribbling, shielding, 1<sup>st</sup> defender responsibilities) Same grids as above except now there is a three foot goal in the middle of each line. Attackers try to score by passing the ball through the goal. Defenders can counter attack to the opposite goal if they win the ball. Players switch sides after a goal or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other. **Coaching Points:** Remind attackers to keep the ball close with a soft touch and to shield the ball as the attempt to penetrate. Remind defenders that as first defender, they should primarily pressure to prevent penetration, waiting for the attacker to make a mistake before they attempt to steal the ball. The addition of a goal makes the defender’s job a little easier and the attacker’s job a little more difficult.

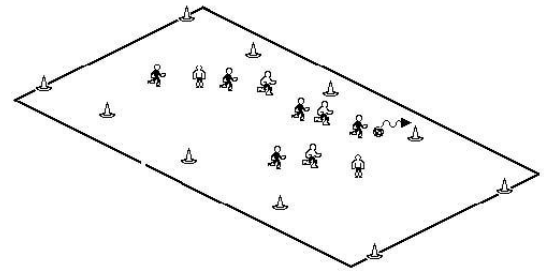
6) 2 vs. 2 to Four Cross Goals---(Objective – 2 v 2 concepts, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker and defender, taking the ball away from pressure.) Teams defend one goal and have the opportunity to score on the other three, you must dribble through a goal to score a point. The goals are on the ends of a large cross in a square grid roughly 10yd X 10yd. Have one team of 2 on deck, they come on when a team gets scored on twice. Game is continuous, they must run on immediately. **Coaching Points:** Remind players of their roles. 1<sup>st</sup> attacker (penetrate, either by dribbling or passing), 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker (provide support, to one side at an angle, in a position to receive a pass to either penetrate or take the ball away from pressure), 1<sup>st</sup> defender (pressure the 1<sup>st</sup> attacker and prevent penetration. Try to force toward the 2<sup>nd</sup> defender), 2<sup>nd</sup> defender, provide support to one side and behind the 1<sup>st</sup> defender, waiting to capitalize on the 1<sup>st</sup> attackers mistake, cut off a pass, or double team the 1<sup>st</sup> attacker). The extra goals should serve as motivation for the attacking players to shift the ball away from pressure toward another goal.

7) 2 vs. 2 To Four Small Goals---(Objective – 2 v 2 concepts, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker and defender, taking the ball away from pressure.) In a 15 X 15 yard grid with a small goal in each corner teams of two attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The coach will set up as many grids as needed to



accommodate the players. When the ball goes out of bounds it can be passed or dribbled in to play. The teams should be rotated every three minutes until all groups have played against each other. *Version 2:* 3 vs. 3 in a 20 X 25 yard grid. Teams should show a triangle shape in attack. **Coaching Points:** Remind players of their roles. 1<sup>st</sup> attacker (penetrate, either by dribbling or passing), 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker (provide support, to one side at an angle, in a position to receive a pass to either penetrate or take the ball away from pressure), 1<sup>st</sup> defender (pressure the 1<sup>st</sup> attacker and prevent penetration. Try to force toward the 2<sup>nd</sup> defender), 2<sup>nd</sup> defender, provide support to one side and behind the 1<sup>st</sup> defender, waiting to capitalize on the 1<sup>st</sup> attacker's mistake, cut off a pass, or double team the 1<sup>st</sup> attacker). The extra goals should serve as motivation for the attacking players to shift the ball away from pressure toward another goal. When the third attacker and defender are added, introduce those roles, which is to add balance by supporting the play on the opposite side of the 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker or defender, thus showing a triangular shape.

8) 4 vs. 4 Endzone Game---(Objective – Penetrating passes) Teams comprised of 4-6 players depending on numbers and space. To score you must pass the ball to a teammate into the opponent's end zone (created with discs). The player cannot go into the endzone until after the ball has been passed. **Coaching Points:** Stress recognizing opportunities and timing of passes. Keep heads up in order to see the opportunities to penetrate.



9) Triangle Goal Game---(Objective – Changing the point of attack) Make a triangle with three cones in the center of the field. The sides of the triangle each serve as a goal mouth so teams can shoot at three different goals. Place 2 goalies in the triangle and the 2 goalies must protect the three goal mouths. Two even teams play a normal soccer game, except they both can score on any of the three faces of the triangle for a point. The game is continuous and if a goalie catches the ball he just throws it out so the game continues. *Version 2:* Use two balls at the same time. **Coaching Points:** Players should always be on the lookout for taking the ball away from pressure in order to quickly change the point of attack or maintain possession until they can exploit a weakness or opening in the defense. Patience is key for the attacking team.

10) 4 vs. 4 To Four Small Goals---(Objective – Combination play, roles of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, attacker and defender.) In a 30 X 35 yard grid, the same rules as 3 vs. 3 but now players must show a diamond shape in attack. **Coaching Points:** Continue to stress the players' roles, with the 4<sup>th</sup> player now providing additional balance. Players should show a diamond shape in attack.

\*\*\*\*\* Every practice should include a scrimmage\*\*\*\*\*

### LOLSC RECOMMENDATIONS

**Game form:** 6 vs 6 or 8 vs 8 (both including a goalkeeper)

**Field Size:** 60 yds x 45 yds (6 v 6); 80 yds long x 55 yds wide (8 v 8)

**Goal Size:** 6 ft. x 18 ft

**Roster size:** 11 – 15 players

**Game Duration:** 4 x 12 mins

**Ball:** #4

**Duration of Practice:** 60 to 90 minutes one to two times per week during the fall season. If playing indoor or spring season, practice should be limited to once per week.

No offside rule

Players should not be limited to playing one “position”, but be rotated throughout the season so as to get experience everywhere. All players should be rotated through the goalkeeper position.

All players should play at least 50% of each game. Rosters should be limited so as to provide the maximum amount of game time (100% is the goal) for each player. Uninterrupted play is becoming more important at this level, so as to allow players to get into the flow of the game. Substitute less often for longer periods of time.

Players should play up to 20 matches per calendar year.

No consequences should be imposed for players missing practices or games.

May attend 1 – 2 festivals or tournaments per year where no results are compiled. Travel time should be 1 hour or less.

Players should be given time off from organized soccer each year.

## **LYME/OLD LYME SOCCER CLUB U-12 CURRICULUM**

Qualities of the coach at this level – Sensitive teacher, enthusiastic, possess soccer awareness, ability to demonstrate or utilize someone whom can paint a good picture (older player, assistant coach). Possess knowledge of the key factors of basic skills. Give encouragement. Have an appreciation for the relationship or connection between individual skill and small group insight, and the players' eventual success at the older ages and the larger game model of 11 v 11.

Coaching License recommended - USSF 'E' Certificate or NSCAA Regional Diploma

<b><u>AgeGroup</u></b>	<b><u>Skill Priorities</u></b>
<b>U-12 (Grades 5 &amp; 6)</b>	<b>Continue with all U-10 foci</b> <b>Speed Dribbling in Traffic</b> <b>Ability to chip the ball</b> <b>Accurately play long passes</b> <b>Offensive/Defensive Heading</b> <b>Power/Accuracy Shooting</b>
	<b><u>Tactical Priorities</u></b> <b>Communication</b> <b>Basic Support Positions</b> <b>Receiving the Ball Away from Pressure</b> <b>Combination Play</b> <b>How and when to switch the point of attack</b> <b>Pressure vs Containing</b> <b>Proper 2 vs 2 roles</b> <b>Introduction to all roles in 3 vs 3</b>

The period this age group is entering is often referred to as the dawn of tactics. Typically players of this age begin to understand the basic tactical situations of the game and are more aware of movement off the ball and the reasons for tactical choices. Problem-solving becomes systematic and these players tend to learn quickly. Children of this age typically are beginning to develop abstract awareness, so they can understand coaches when we talk about space and runs off of the ball. However, just because they understand these basic tactical concepts does not mean we should focus on these concepts entirely. Players are still developing technically at this age, especially as they go through growth spurts and awkward phases.

It is quite common to look out at a U12 field and see players that are physically the size of adults. Yet, other U12 players appear as if they could still be in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. These children are all growing at different rates and undergoing physical, mental, emotional, and social changes. The average age for the beginning of pubescence in girls is 10 years old with a range of 7 to 14; for boys it is age 12 with a range of 9 to 16. As coaches, we need to be sensitive to these changes and their social implications when coaching this age group. Some players may pick up skills quickly, where as others may struggle. However, it may be the case that this is simply the result of differences in maturation. In a year, the slower developer may surpass the player who developed earlier. For this reason we need to be patient

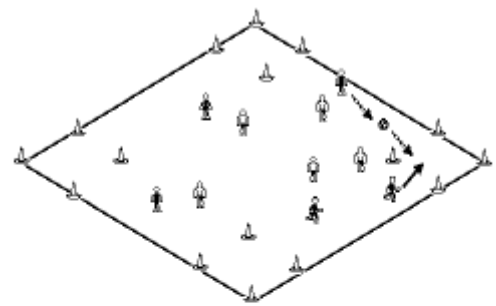
and keep open minds about all players through these years. They are aware of their struggles more than anyone else as peer evaluation is omnipresent at these ages. When we see them struggling, it is important for us to help them and to keep the game fun.

#### *Typical Characteristics of U12 Players*

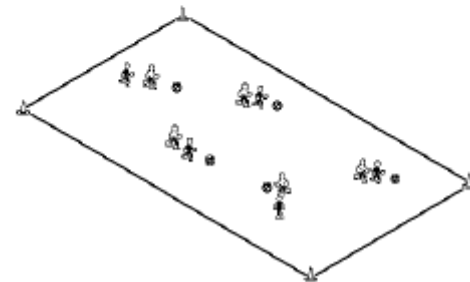
- *all children are maturing at different rates*
- *players need to warm-up and stretch---muscle pulls and other nagging injuries are common otherwise*
- *players will typically understand elemental abstract concepts and hypothetical situations*
- *they like to solve problems*
- *peer evaluation is a constant*
- *egos are sensitive*
- *coordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt*
- *technique still needs to be reinforced constantly*
- *playing too much can lead to overuse injuries*
- *playing too much and not feeling like they have a choice in the matter can lead to burnout and drop-out*
- *this is the dawn of tactics!*
- *keep asking the players to be creative and to take risks---we never want them to stop doing these things*
- *ask for feedback from them---they will tell you how things are going*
- *try to hand over leadership and ownership of the team to them*
- *keep it fun!!!*

#### Some Recommended Games for U12 Players:

**1) Four Square Passing---**(Objective – switching the point of attack and playing away from pressure) Form a grid 35x35 with squares roughly 4 yards across in each corner. Two teams of 4 to 6 players try to score by passing the ball to a teammate who makes a run into one of the four squares. Players in the squares cannot be defended against and they can pass or dribble the ball out. Balls out of play can be passed or dribbled back into play. **Coaching Points:** Players should pass or dribble the ball away from pressure. Teammates off the ball should be finding good support positions. Move the ball quickly to catch opposition by surprise.



**2) Shield-Steal---**(Objective – teach shielding in order to be able to protect the ball and retain possession in traffic) Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you don't have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity.. *Version 2:* make this competitive by breaking the group

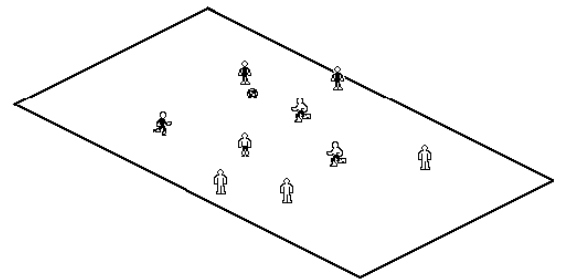


into two teams and seeing which team has more balls at the end of the time. **Coaching Points:** body sideways, arms outstretched providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield

**3) Colors-Warm Up---**(Objective – Communication, combination play) Half of the players in red pennies, half in blue. Teams playing together in the same space combine in the passing sequence blue-blue-red-red-blue-blue-red-red etc. etc. Ball can never stop, players can never stop moving, and ball cannot leave area of play. Coach can limit touch-count, mandate which foot to pass with or which side of foot to pass with as sees fit. When players can do first sequence adequately and without frequent errors change the sequence to blue-blue-blue-red-red-red-blue-blue-blue etc. etc. Make this activity competitive by counting errors and setting goals by lowering allowed errors.

**Coaching Points:** Stress communication, heads up to find teammates, and technical passing points throughout.

**4) 2v2+2 or 3v3+3---**(Objective – Combination play, playing ball away from pressure, pressuring vs. containing for defenders) Three distinct teams in colors (red, green, white), one team starts as defenders and the other 2 teams play together to keep the ball away from the defense (so it is actually 4v2 or 6v3). When the ball is taken by the defense, the color (two/three players) they stole it from becomes the new defenders. Players must pay close attention to who the defenders are, to



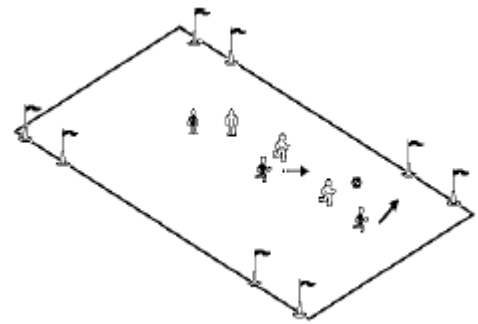
score the teams in possession must make 6 passes before losing possession. If they do this, both teams on offense receive 1 point. **Coaching Points:** attacking team is numbers up, stress spreading out the defenders and moving the ball quickly, playing away from pressure. Remind players to be thinking 1-2 passes in advance. For defenders, remind that first, the attacking team must be contained, then pressure to try to cause a mistake only after they have sufficient numbers to cut off outlet passes.

**5) 2v2 with 2+2---**(Objective – combination play, 2 v 2 roles) In a grid 15x15 yards, each team has two players in the grid and two on the outside, on opposite sides from each other. The teams score by either making six passes (with teammate inside the grid or support players) or by executing a 1-2 (wall pass) with a support player. After 3 minutes switch inside and outside players. **Coaching Points:** keep head up and find teammate, roles of 1<sup>st</sup> attacker (penetration) and 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker (support)

**6) 5 Goal Game---**(Objective – combination play, 3 v 3 roles) 4v4+2 in 35x40 yard grid. Five 2-yard goals are spread out throughout the grid. The plus 2 players are always on the attacking team. The teams score by passing through any of the goals to a teammate. Must receive with inside of foot, then outside, weak foot inside/outside are different expectations that can be put on the players. First team to 10 points wins. Players need to be able to see where the open goals are, and receive with a “picture” of what is around them. With this in mind, if the players are advanced enough, the player receiving through the goal must play 1 touch. Coach could require receiving player to perform a feint before touching ball.

**Coaching Points:** keep head up and find teammate, roles of 1<sup>st</sup> attacker (penetration) and 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker (support), and 3<sup>rd</sup> attacker (upset balance of defense with penetrating runs) and 1<sup>st</sup> defender (pressure), 2<sup>nd</sup> defender (cover), 2<sup>rd</sup> defender (balance). In a particular session only stress either the attacking or defensive roles, but not both.

7) 3v3 or 4v4 To Four Small Goals---(Objective – play away from pressure, attacking and supporting roles) In a 30x30 yard grid, two teams attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The goals are three feet wide and setup near each corner. This game can be played to lines, goals with keepers, four squares or targets.



**Coaching Points:** With three attackers the players now have the 1<sup>st</sup> attacker (ball) and 2<sup>nd</sup> attackers (support) and a triangle shape in attack, looking to change the point of attack away from pressure. The defending team now has the 1<sup>st</sup> defender (pressure), 2<sup>nd</sup> defender (cover), and 3<sup>rd</sup> defender (balance).

8) Bread and Butter---(Objectives - Quick transitions, receiving and playing the ball away from pressure) Typical 4 vs. 4 but with an additional 4 players who stand on outside of field and can be used by either team as outlets (with only 2 touches). If a team gets scored upon, they become the team on the outside and the outside team plays on the field. Use approximately a 20x25 yard area. **Coaching Points:** Stress correct technique, receiving sideways on, and facing where they wish to play. May restrict the players to 2/3 touch to force quicker decisions, and better body position before the ball arrives. Remind players to make the transition quickly when teams switch. Keep score and make the game competitive.

9) 6v6 team touch---(Objective – Communication, changing the point of attack) Play a normal 6v6 game except for the fact that every player on a team must touch the ball before their team can score. This forces players to show for the ball, to communicate, and to spread out the field. Version 2: If players are advanced, you can enforce a 3 or 2 touch limit on players. **Coaching Points:** Support players spread out to support positions, Stress correct receiving technique, receiving sideways on, and facing where they wish to play.

10) 8v8 dual sided goal---(Objective – Communications, changing point of attack.) Using a portable goal or setting up a goal in which the goalie must protect both sides of the goal, play 8 against 8. Both teams can score from either side of the goal. If a goalie makes a save she just punts the ball out. **Coaching Points:** Teams must learn to change the point of attack and must give support to each other and communicate constantly. This will help teach teams to make the field big when on offense and to try to compact the field on defense. Version 2 – For more technically advanced players, allow goals to count as 2 points if chipped over the goal from the opposite side. This will address chipping and perhaps heading skills as well.

\*\*\*\*\* Every practice should include a scrimmage\*\*\*\*\*

**LOLSC RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Game form:** 11 vs 11 or 8 v 8 (*including a goalkeeper*)

**Roster size:** 11 to 15 players (8 v 8 format), 15 to 20 players (11 v 11 format)

**Field Size:** 100 yds x 50 yds (11 v 11) or 70 to 80 yds long X 40 -50 yds wide (8 v 8)

**Goal Size:** 8 ft. x 24 ft. (11 v 11) or 6 ft. x 18 ft (8 v 8)

**Match Duration:** 2 x 30 (or 35 at both coaches agreement)

**Ball:** #4

**Duration of Practice:** 60 to 90 minutes one to two times per week during the fall season. If playing indoor or spring season, practice should be limited to once per week.

Players start to specialize in their position. Goalkeepers should share time in order of priority. When not playing in the goal, keepers should play a field position.

Players should play up to 30 matches per calendar year.

Minor consequences for missing practice or a game may now be imposed as responsibility and team loyalty should start to be developed.

May play in 2 – 3 tournaments per year, preferably of the round robin format. Travel should be limited to day trips with 1 or 2 overnight trips per calendar year.

## **LYME/OLD LYME SOCCER CLUB U-14 CURRICULUM**

Qualities of the coach at this level – The U-14 coach should have a firm grasp of both the youth game (U-12 and below) and the junior game (U-14 to U-16). He or she should have an appreciation for creativity and independent thinking. At the same time, he or she should be able to communicate group and team themes to the players in a clear and simple manner.

Coaching License recommended - USSF 'D' License or NSCAA Advanced Regional Diploma

This becomes the transitional age into the adult game. The match form should be 11 v 11 and there begins to be a greater focus on how ball skill and decisions influence success on the field.

At this point, there is a clear difference between the emotional and physical maturity of a 13-year-old and an 18-year-old. While there is not a big difference between the way a 13-year-old or an 18-year-old processes information (thinking and problem solving), keep in mind that the 13-year old is just beginning to think at this level. In contrast, an 18-year old will have more experience and confidence in his or her ability to think and problem solve in this manner.

13-year-old children are now less certain about themselves, less communicative, and somewhat more vulnerable. They are now more focused on their friends and begin to view themselves as being somewhat separate from their parents. They are also stronger physically and are more aware of what their bodies can do (speed, strength, appearance).

The 14-year-old is typically becoming more outgoing and confident and loves competition. He or she is also increasingly more able to plan, think ahead, and to imagine options. Coaches can have more discussion about the “what if...”

From now on the matches are full-sided 11 v 11 games. It is at the U-14 age group that coaches should begin to focus somewhat on team issues, such as how the backs work together in different parts of the field, or the relationship between the different lines of the team (defenders and midfielders, mid-fielders and forwards, etc.). As the players graduate to the junior level, they should possess a comfort with the ball and an insight into the game that will allow them to deal with the increased pace of the game, both in athletic speed and speed of decisions. The goal at this point in a player's development is to begin expanding his or her understanding of the game as their technical and game maturity allows. Again, this is accomplished through the small-sided game model for practice (up through 9 v 9 games) and the full-sided game for matches. The graduation to the full-sided game model should be a logical and subtle step. The ideas and principles that apply to the smaller game models continue to apply to the bigger game. The outcome of the game at this age is still largely determined by ball skill and game insight.

## **GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING IN PRACTICE**

At this point, most of the exercises and games that the players play in practice should be competitive, with a winning and losing team(s). Their focus should be on how their decisions and their ball skill help or hinder their team's ability to win at whatever game or exercise that they play.

Two critical and interrelated themes in every practice should be recognizing when and how to get the ball out of pressure with the goal of getting forward and recognizing when and how to win the ball back, both as an individual and as a group. Games and exercises should be set up that encourage players to make decisions based on the cues and clues that exist in the game. Players should experience a variety of games, from 4 v 4 to 8 v 8: some with and some without goalkeepers, some to small goals, some to large goals, some with 2 goals and some with 4 to 6 small goals. Each set up will encourage different challenges for the players to address – all within the basic framework of keeping the ball and winning the ball back – and going to goal, and winning the game.

The coach needs to consider the players' technical development because without sound technique, good ideas on the field are useless. Putting players in small-sided games where they have to solve a problem by application of their technique is a critical part of training this age. At times, success or failure in these games and this environment are the direct result of the players' ability with the ball.

An important theme for this age, therefore, is to address the player's accountability for his or her decisions and ball skill as he or she and their team look to find ways to win their game. Figuring out how and when to keep the ball or when to go forward, as well as how and when to win the ball back are basic themes where this accountability can be addressed. Within each game that the coach sets up for the players, this can be accomplished by focusing on speed of play and the ability to solve problems in competitive situations. In general, most players this age who are playing at a competitive club level are technically good and can solve problems well in slower games or isolated situations. When the demands of the game and the speed of play increase, many have a hard time mastering the ball, staying tuned in, seeing enough, and making sense of their plays. By placing players in competitive situations i.e., faster games, these aspects improve dramatically over time. If the players are not held accountable for their decisions or if the environment is not challenging or competitive enough to punish players for their mistakes, then the players run the risk of developing bad habits that may hinder their long term development.

In training sessions play small-sided games with different demands and challenges. The games should be fast. To keep up with the speed of play, good technical ability and habits on and off the ball are necessary. The players need to stay tuned in mentally, to read the game, deal with the demands of the game, and to make decisions that help their team win. The goal is to help their personalities to grow and for them to begin to solve problems as a group. Therefore, give the players some freedom to make decisions, to solve problems, and to experiment with the game. Be more concerned with them developing into better players who can figure out how to win than with telling them exactly what to do.

## **GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING IN MATCHES:**

Although 13 and 14 year olds begin to resemble adults, they are still far from a complete player. Players must continue to focus on individual and small group ideas. This can be accomplished by focusing on “the game within the game.” Find themes on which to focus that – when taken together and accomplished with skill – add up to successful soccer. There should be some attention to organization, but the focus should be more on the smaller group relationships on the field, i.e., how the backs work together or how the backs work with the mid fielders, or how players can pressure the ball in 3’s and 4’s. The match continues to be the place for these players to develop their instincts for the game. Mistakes on the field should be errors of commission rather than errors of omission. It should not be the place for them to “play scared” or “safe.”

Coaches should encourage big picture themes such as staying connected with the rest of the team, as well as more focused idea like encouraging players to find ways to get past opponents – either individually or in groups. For example, on a given match day, the coach can encourage counting passes, or counting how often a dangerous ball is served into the box. The coach can even reward the team after the game based on how many of these plays they pulled off. At some point, as the players get better at these smaller pieces of the game, winning becomes the more consistent by-product.

\*\*\*\*\* Every practice should include a scrimmage\*\*\*\*\*

### **LOLSC RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Game Form:** 11 v 11

**Roster size:** 15 to 20 players

**Game Duration:** 2 X 35

**Substitution:** Still unlimited, however at this point players should start to get used to playing for longer periods of time and getting used to the fact that fitness is part of the game at higher levels.

**GK Status:** GK chosen based on ability

**Field Size:** 100 yards x 60 yards

**Ball Size:** 5

**Duration of Practice:** should be 75 to 90 minutes long. There should be a ratio of 2 to 3 practices per match.

Players should play up to 30 matches in a calendar year.

Consequences for missing practices and games are appropriate.

May play in 2 – 3 tournaments per year, including state and regional competitions. The State Cup tournament is a good competition for this age group.