



AURORA ARSENAL SOCCER CLUB

AGE GROUP CHARACTERISTICS – U10

U10 Age Group Skill Priorities:

Continue with Dribbling from U8
Passing with Inside and Outside of Both Feet
Shooting with Both Feet---Using Laces
Receiving the Ball with all Parts of Body
Heading
Tactical Priorities
Basic Attacking Ideas
Basic Defending Ideas
Comprehend 1 vs 1 Concepts
Comprehend 2 vs 1 Concepts
Introduction to 2 vs 2 Concepts
Comprehend Roles of 1st and 2nd Defenders
Comprehend Roles of 1st and 2nd Attackers

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. Creating an environment in which players get maximum repetitions of technical skills is key. Players at this age should still work on ball mastery and demonstrate growing familiarity and confidence with a ball at their feet.

The biggest area of focus needs to be on the technical side of development. Our goal is to make the player technically competent, under pressure from an opponent, so that they can spend their time managing the challenges in the game, not the challenges of the ball. Once a player stops worrying about controlling a ball they can begin to think about solutions to the problems the game presents. The sooner we get our players solving their own problems without the coach, the better we will be. Encourage one versus one attacking all the time. 33% of your training sessions should have a topic of 1v1.

The training topics at this age need to be very small in scope and depth. For example, if you are working on 1v1 dribbling make sure to focus on change in speed, change in direction, and deception. Depending on how much training your players have had previously, doing all of those topics within 1v1 might be too much.

Demand at all times that everyone plays with the correct intent. There is no "kicking" or "booting" in soccer. You can dribble, pass, or shoot. A pass is a kick with a plan to get it to a specific teammate and a shot is a kick that has the intent of being a goal.

Build a love for the game that becomes a passion. We want our players finding soccer in their hearts and it starts at the youngest age groups. If you love it you will spend time watching it on TV, training outside of organized events, and being 100% committed to it as a teenager and young adult. Make it fun!

Don't stifle creativity at any age, but especially the younger ages. A player might try something that, while wrong in the adult game, we might have to positively enforce at this point in their careers to ensure we are not creating robots as players.

No lectures, no lines, limited drills.

Characteristics of U10 Children:

- *attention span lengthens from U8* - they start to show the ability to sequence thought and actions.
- *explanations must still be brief, concise, and indicate purpose.*
- *they start to think ahead and think "If this, then that"* - some begin moving from concrete thinking to abstract thinking.
- *they are more inclined toward 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.
- *becoming more "serious"* - openly, intensively competitive, without intention of fouling.
- *they start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts* - but not always sure why one decision is better than another.
- *children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure.*
- *players greatly affiliate with their team or their coach* - "I play for Navy" or "I play for coach Amy's team".
- *adults outside of the family may take on added significance.*
- *continued positive reinforcement needed.*
- *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* - greater diversity in playing ability and physical maturity, gross and small motor skills becoming more refined and reliable. Boys and girls begin to develop separately.
- *more prone than adults to heat stress.*
- *repetitive technique very important, but it must be dynamic, not static.*

Things You Can Expect:

Some coaches say that the 9 and 10 year-old player is beginning to "turn the corner" and starting to look like a real soccer player. However, games are still frantically paced and unpredictable for the most part. These players are starting to find out how much fun it is to play the game skillfully, but they will still stop and laugh if the referee gets hit in the backside with the ball during a game. Some other things that we can expect when working with the U10 players are:

- They start to understand offsides, but still forget themselves when the goal is in front of them.
- They will really beat up on each other during practice... especially boy's teams.
- During a game, the parents will scream out "HAND BALL" or "COME ON REF, CALL IT BOTH WAYS" at least fifteen times.
- They might cry after the game if they lose, but will forget it if you offer them a popsicle.
- You might actually catch them practicing on their own without you telling them to do so.
- Their parents are telling them to do one thing during the game, you are telling them another thing, but what they end up doing might be what their friend is telling them to do.
- You will see a pass that is deliberate. You might even see a "back pass".

Coaching Rationale:

Some of the players that are playing as U10's are seasoned veterans of the youth soccer scene, but others may be brand new to the game. As a result, some of them might be very nervous about the whole process. It is our job to keep things in perspective for these young, developing players. True, some of them are becoming quite skillful and are seeing how fun it is to play the game when they can really control the ball. However, many of them are still learning the ropes. Even the more experienced players need to have the game be fun!!! Be flexible/creative, patient, and positive/encouraging.

Emphasis is still placed on having players learn how to control the ball with his/her body, but now, they need to find themselves in more game-like situations. Training is more dynamic and starting to have players make simple, basic decisions such as "Which way is there more space?" or "Who should I pass to?".

Following are some more items that a coach of U10 players should consider:

- Use small-sided games as the main teaching vehicle. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but the full 11-a-side game is still too complicated for them to understand.
- How we group players during training takes on even added significance because of the wide margins of ability levels. We need to mix players up often.
- Stretching is becoming more important, along with a good warm-up. Since the game is faster, make sure that they also have good shin guards. Safety and preventive measures take on added significance.
- Training twice a week is plenty. Sessions need not go longer than one hour, fifteen minutes.
- They should all come with their own size #4 ball. In fact, they still need to be encouraged to play with it by themselves.
- Put them into competitive environments as much as possible. This will not only keep them focused, but it will allow the game itself to teach them. It also will keep things fun for them, and allow you to deal with issues such as 'winning' and 'losing' which is now a very big concern for them.
- Now it is possible to teach them positional play with the expectation that they will get it some of the time. However, it is absolutely necessary that you do not allow players to specialize in any one position. They need to learn basic principles of the game first. Having them play all of the positions is best for their individual development. Remember, our first responsibility is to develop players and let them have fun.
- Whenever possible, allow them to solve their own puzzles. Don't immediately give them solutions on how they can play better. They need to be able to figure the game out for themselves and to think independently.

Typical Training Session:

Here are some items that should be included in a U10 training session:

WARM-UP: A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual body activities that involve the ball. Since there can be one theme to the session, hopefully, the warm-up will lead into the theme of the day. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time after the players have broken a sweat, again, hopefully done with the ball. Again, the warm-up should get the players ready to play. It should be lively, fun, and engaging as well as instructional. There is nothing like a good, fast paced activity to grab the player's attention and make them glad that they came to practice.

INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES: Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not necessarily a real 1v1 game, but some kind of activity where players

act as individuals or cooperate in small groups in a game environment. An example would be a kind of tag game, or a keep-away game. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait in lines. Play games of "inclusion" instead of games where the "loser sits". Be creative. These players like "crazy" games with a lot of action.

PLAY THE GAME: Small-sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 4v4 up to 8v8. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball over a goal line in order to get a point). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible.

COOL-DOWN & HOMEWORK: Finish the session with a cool-down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Think of some ball trick that you would like to see them try to do, like, bounce it off their head, then thigh, then foot, and then catch it. Can one player kick a ball to a partner and then back without it hitting the ground? Can they do that with their heads? It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return.

Some Recommended Games for U10 Players:

1) Free Dribble---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 toward 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.

2) Shield-Steal---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. 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. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.

3) Gates 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.

4) 1 vs 1 To Lines---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.

5) 1 vs 1 To Two Small Goals---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.

6) 2 vs 2 to Four Cross Goals---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 10 yds X 10 yds. 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.

7) 2 vs 2 To Four Small Goals---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.

8) 4 vs 4 Endzone Game---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 cones). The player cannot go into the endzone until after the ball has been passed. Stress recognizing opportunities and timing of passes.

9) Triangle Goal Game---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.

10) 4 vs 4 To Four Small Goals---In a 30 X 35 yard grid, the same rules as 3 vs 3, but now players must show a diamond shape.

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