

U6-U8 On Pitch Coaching

Purpose of This Document This guide is aimed at coaches for under-eights, under-sevens and under-sixes. It is really just a collection of tips and ideas for coaching games in training and competitive situation.

Roll Of The On Pitch Coach At this level, the coach is a real part of the team –“the eighth player” - and has the job of coordinating, organising, coaxing, encouraging and cajoling the players in the team. The coach must be aware of his/her size in relation to the players and avoid collisions. The best way to do this is to stay behind the players and to avoid running backwards.

The coach must respect the referee’s decision and encourage the players to be courteous, dignified and above all good sportsmen/sportswomen. The coach must praise the team and resist picking on individual players for praise or condemnation. Mistakes should be identified and rectified in a positive way.

It is easy for coaches to get carried away in the excitement of things – this is part of the fun, but coaches must remember that these are very young children who can be easily upset and even put off the sport if coaches get too emotional about things.

Organisation The main difficulty to overcome, especially with the younger players, is how to get some kind of defensive or attacking line. The first step to achieving this is to identify two players to be placed on each wing. These players have a point of reference, the touchline, which makes it easier for them to get back into position. The coach can focus on getting these players in position and the other players can “fill-in”. Players should be carefully position before each restart.

Later, two additional players can be positioned inside of the wingers. The coach now has two players on each wing that know their position, with 3 players in the centre. The less “position orientated players” should take up these inner central positions.

Players can tend to bunch around the ball at a restart. The coach needs to spread them evenly. Use the wingers to create the spread. Get the players to stretch out their arms sideways and touch fingertips. Tell the player, making the free pass, who the receiver will be and instruct the other players to support the receiver as he/she runs forward. This can help to stop players competing over who is going to receive the ball.



In competitive games, the coach should pre-organise the position of players. Players good at holding position on the wings other players in the middle. Writing this down can help the coach to keep players in position. This is particularly useful when making substitutions to ensure minimal disruption to players.

Involvement

Especially in training, some players are often left out. These players can be involved by being given the opportunity to make or receive the free pass.

Another problem is players being selective about who they are going to pass to. This causes frustration when better-positioned players are ignored. Initially, this can be dealt with by stipulating that the nearest player should be passed to. This is a safe option, but has the down side of dissuading players to think in terms of longer passes to create space.

Players are often left behind and fail to keep up with the play. Coaches should encourage the stragglers to move up, even if this means going passed defensive players.

Substitutions

Subs should be given an opportunity to play in every game. It is easier to change the players at halftime. Ensure that someone is with the substitutes while they are waiting to play and that they are keeping warm.

Quick Passing

When tackled, players often “dither” as to where to pass the ball (look for their best friend, or a player thought to be better) Training games can enforce a special quick passes rule. When “tackle” is called, the ref counts “1, 2, 3”. If the pass is not made, the ball is turned over to the opposition.

Running Backwards

Younger players often try to avoid being tackled by running backwards to try and find a “long way around” the defence. This can work, but more often than not, the player loses ground and is tackled behind his/her own side. The player is either without support or a forward pass is forced.

In training sessions, the special “no going backwards” rule encourages players to run forward and test the defence by looking for gaps, but always moving the gain line forward. Players going backwards more than 3 metres (can be varied) lose the ball to the opposition.



Passing Before Tackling Passing before being tackled can give a big advantage to an attacking team. This can be encouraged in practice games by giving a turnover to the opposition if a tackle is made (or 3rd tackle).

Tactics Below is a list of tactical tips to winning mini-rugby games.

1.	<p>Avoid mistakes</p> <p>Games are only really lost by mistakes being made and possession being lost. The key mistakes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Running into touch. - Handling errors/knock on/forward passes <p>Therefore, the first thing is to avoid these errors.</p>
2.	<p>Key Words</p> <p>Coaches should develop some key words that players understand what is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Push up - Switch - Get back
3.	<p>Diagonal Running</p> <p>If playing on a wide pitch. Players going for the try line can often distance themselves from defending players by running diagonally to wards the try line (i.e. aim for corner post)</p>
4.	<p>Switching Play</p> <p>Attack can often get bogged down when near the try line. A tactic can be to instruct the players to switch play. Pall carrier drops back inside/behind. Other attacking players drop back to be in position to offer support.</p>
5.	<p>Retreat After Tackle</p> <p>To avoid being offside, players must be encouraged to retreat after each tackle. Players should not turn their back, but should face forward when moving backwards.</p>
6.	<p>Move Up Defence</p> <p>If attacking team drops backwards, defenders should “push up” to create pressure on the attacking side.</p>

