

Discovery Phase Summary
for u6 and u7s
Presented by Chris Jarrett
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- Discovering one's (im)possibilities through trial and error
- Natural development: "learn FOOTBALL by playing football"
- No 'coaching' but organising fun football exercises
- Replicating the 'street / park football' environment of the past
- Emphasis on building a love of the game

Coaches for these age groups (u6s and u7s) are usually interested parents who desire to help their own child and the team their child plays in. These parents or volunteers may have limited coaching experience since the days they were run around paddocks or fields and may never have played organised football themselves. Fortunately, coaches for this age group can immediately take pressure off themselves by not considering their role to be that of a coach, but instead as an "organiser of fun football exercises". There are numerous excellent resources and courses available to assist in organising fun practices which I have summarised and referred to in this introductory handout. I would encourage coaches to utilize these resources to not only save themselves time but to also encourage greater enjoyment for the kids i.e. once you organise the sessions you are just letting kids play.

My recollection of training / coaching u6 – 7s was that it was like trying to herd cats. Children at these ages:

- are still ‘clumsy’ (lack fine motor skills), because they are still developing their coordination
- have a short span of attention and are quickly and easily distracted
- are ‘self-centred’ and not yet able to really work together (so do not ask them to perform team play, it is impossible for them!)
- play or participate for fun with short bursts of energy and enthusiasm
- are unable to handle a lot of information (instructions / feedback)

So if you are ever getting frustrated then you’re taking seriously what the kids aren’t (or can’t). Tactical information, formations and set plays are just not age appropriate. The kids often struggle with left and right or forward and back (it often takes a couple of minutes after changing sides at half time to consistently head towards the right goal). At this age the children are only just learning to master the ball i.e. discovering how to control that rolling and bouncing “round thing” with their feet.

Our “organised fun football exercises” facilitates this learning to master the ball with activities designed to develop some of the foundation skills of football:

- Striking the ball (kicking the ball and hopefully a pass or two down the track)
- Running with the ball (dribbling, chasing the ball, keeping it in the field of play)
- 1v1(moving around a defender or moving to a player with the ball to block or dispossess)

The maximum safe workload for U/6’s and U/7’s is two weekly training sessions of 45 minutes and one game during the weekend. The expectation at our club is for players and coaches to commit to 1x 45 minute training session per week (rather than just arrive at weekend games). A training session for children in this age consists of 3 components: The Beginning, The Middle and The End:

1. **The Beginning** (approx 10 minutes)
The purpose of The Beginning (better known as the warm-up) is to get the kids in the right frame of mind and activate their bodies. It’s unnecessary to run laps around the field and do stretches to achieve that: all sorts of relays and tagging games with and without the ball are much better (more specific, more fun) and also help develop the children’s basic coordination.
2. **The Middle** (approx 15 minutes)
The Middle is the section of the training session where we conduct fun football exercises such as dribbling, passing, shooting, etc.
3. **The End** (approx 20 minutes)
The last part (The End) is allocated for playing all sorts of Small-Sided Games

My suggested **training schedule for 2017** utilises the “model sessions” provided by:

<http://www.ffacoachingresource.com.au/the-building-blocks/the-discovery-phase/session-listing/?cid>

Week 1	Striking the ball - Session 1
Week 2	Running with the ball - Session 1
Week 3	Striking the ball - Session 2
Week 4	1 v 1 – Session 1
Week 5	Striking the ball - Session 3
Week 6	Running with the ball - Session 2
Week 7	Striking the ball - Session 4
Week 8	Running with the ball - Session 3
Week 9	Striking the ball - Session 5
Week 10	1 v 1 – Session 2
Week 11	Striking the ball - Session 6
Week 12	Running with the ball - Session 4
Week 13	Striking the ball- Coaches pick of elements from Session 1 & 2
Week 14	1 v 1 – Coaches pick from elements from Sessions 1 & 2
Week 15	Striking the ball- Coaches pick of elements from Session 3 & 4
Week 16	Running with the ball - Coaches pick of elements from Session 1 & 2
Week 17	Striking the ball- Coaches pick of elements from Session 5 & 6
Week 18	Running with the ball - Coaches pick of elements from Session 3 & 4

At this age I’d suggest that the “Coaches Pick” should be selected from the drills that the kids had most fun with.

Training should be undertaken with size 3 balls only. Heading the ball is not required in this game format and should be actively discouraged due to the risk of injury to children.

Develop both a kick and a pass with the dominant foot (encouraging techniques other than toe punting), and moving, controlling and trapping the ball with both feet. If you can achieve this at the end of 2 years I reckon that you’ve done well.

Games / Game leaders

Non-competitive. 4 v 4 – no goalkeeper. Size 3 ball. 2 x 20 minutes. The opportunity to have fun No throw ins and no corner kicks. On the weekend game days, the coach will often be on the field as a “game leader”. I would also encourage utilising a parent as a timekeeper for substitutions. If you have substitutes, make sure each player gets as even amount of game time as practical.

Play is restarted by your players numerous times at this level (ball going over the touch line (sideline) / the goal lines, or following a goal being scored). I suggest getting the players (on the field) to take turns to restart play, this encourages participation by all. From any restart, which can be a pass or dribble the ball into play, the ball must touch a teammate before a goal can be scored. When in opposition your players need to be 5 meters away from the ball until it is in play and retreat back to the half-way line when the opposition is restarting from their goal line.

I avoid ever keeping scores and never talk about winning or losing. Encourage, encourage, encourage. Look for good passages of play and improvement in play – they are everywhere.

Praise effort, not talent.

If people (players, coaches, parents and other spectators) become overly exuberant with scoring goals and winning it also sets up disappointment with goals scored against and “losing”. I try to look at any goal scored as just a break in play: if we score “well done, let’s get back ready to start again”, if scored against “righteo its our kick off, whose turn to pass the ball ?”.

References / resources

<http://www.ffacoachingresource.com.au/about-the-curriculum/the-discovery-phase/>

<http://northernswfootball.com.au/coach-headquarters/>

Football for Kids eBook:

https://issuu.com/northernswfootball/docs/football_for_kids_ebook

Consider taking the opportunity to undertake a MiniRoos Certificate. This is a very practical course of only 1 ½ hours duration which is advertised throughout the year via our club and the websites above.

Please feel free to contact any of the executives of the club for assistance with coaching or me directly. We thank you for your support of the club and our beautiful game. Whist coaching kids in this 5 – 7 year old age group can be challenging it should also be a lot of fun.

Regards,

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