Hello Coaches!
Games are only days away! You should be ramping up practices and we wanted to send out just a little guidance to help.

Only a 3 minute read! - Do it, it will help your kids!

Please make sure you've done the following:

- Started and set consistent practice times and location(s). Please be respectful of parents' time.
- Held Parent Meeting - let me know if you want help with this and I can send out some guidance.
- Sent out game schedule and organized game day logistics and assigned a coach helper for the 2nd field.

Reward for Reading this far: Custom GPT - GAMES FOR PRACTICE
https://chatgpt.com/g/g-68b056a1fbc081919fa167a27d98c7c3-ai-for-soccer-u6-u7-u8-games

Steps: 1. type a skill you want to work on at practice
2. get a list of games!
3. pick a game and get instructions on how to play

Keep Reading... almost done! Please read below to help with your practices and feel free to reach out with any questions or if you want/need additional help.

U7: Building the Foundations (The Game Is the Teacher)

At this stage, everything is about

- **listening,**
- constant **involvement**
- Spacing and shape
- **beginning of team**

Run practices with **PPP (play - practice - play)**. The idea here is to learn through playing. The game is the best teacher - and it's easier to just do it than explain it!

Practice Structure —>

⚽ **U7 (60 min total)**

- Warmup
- **Play 1 (10 min)**
  3v3/4v4 free play, start quickly. Everyone plays (no subs). Run 2 fields if needed.
- **Practice (25–30 min)**
  - 1-2 short activities, e.g.:
    1. *1v1 to small goals* (teach attacking/defending basics)
    2. *Gate dribbling races* (ball control, direction change)
  - Keep games short and rotate players often.
  - Everyone works, everyone has a ball. Make enough lanes so to limit standing
- **Play 2 (15–20 min)**
  4v4 scrimmage, emphasize spacing, trying skills learned.

Coaching Points:

- Begin teaching **"find space"** (spread out).
- Encourage **decision making**: dribble, pass, or shoot.
- Praise creativity and risk-taking.
- Introduce "stop and listen" moments but keep them brief.

U7: Transitioning to Awareness (From Me Us)

By U7, kids are ready to stretch beyond "just me and the ball" into **awareness of space, teammates, and decisions.**

- **Still start with listening games** but now add **quick decision-making**
- **Field shape matters more** – Reinforce diamonds, but introduce spacing language: *"find space," "spread out."*
- **Introduce layers -** if your teammate has it, let him/her do it —> you're next.
- **Introduce roles without labels** – Instead of "defense" or "midfield," guide: *"You stay wide," "You go forward."*
- **1v1 and 2v1 moments** – Begin teaching bravery on the ball and the idea of passing if stuck.
- **Freeze for teachable moments** – Stop play occasionally, point out good spacing, and reset. Then go again.

- **Encourage risk-taking** – Let them try tricks, turns, and passes. Don't over-correct.

➡️ **Big idea for U7:** Start seeing the game as more than just you and the ball — learn how "me" connects to "us."

The fun of the game is learned at these young ages —>> keep PLAY in the playing!

Quick overview if you want to know why (and that we are not making this up!) -

PPP Method Overview
History & Genesis

The **PPP method** (Play–Practice–Play) was developed by U.S. Soccer as a departure from the traditional "lines, laps, and lectures" approach. Instead of starting with drills and ending with a scrimmage, PPP flips the order: kids begin with a game, learn skills through guided activities, and then return to a game.

Why It's Valuable

- **Engagement first** – Kids love games, so you capture attention immediately.
- **Natural learning** – Skills develop in real soccer situations instead of isolated drills.
- **Age-appropriate** – Especially for U6–U8, fun and discovery drive development better than rigid structure.
- **Better retention** – Kids remember what they did in a game more than a lecture or static drill.

The Shift from Traditional Drills

Traditional practices often meant standing in line, waiting for a turn, and doing repetitive drills. PPP is the opposite: **more touches, more decisions, more fun.** It's less about "perfect form" and more about **learning the game through play.**

At these young ages, the most important lesson isn't a perfect drill or a perfect pass—it's falling in love with the game. When kids associate soccer with joy, movement, and discovery, they build a foundation that keeps them coming back year after year. As a coach, your role is to protect and nurture that joy: let them play, let them explore, and let the game itself be the teacher. The structure you provide should create just enough guidance for learning while keeping the magic of play alive—because if they're smiling, moving, and wanting more, you've already won.

Feel free to reach out to me with any questions or if you're wanting help or ideas.
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