

Shelburne Soccer Club

SSC Recommended Practices:

The Shelburne Soccer Club is committed to continually improving its offerings to youth soccer players in Shelburne. However, as a Volunteer Organization, it is often difficult for us to provide a personal hand with each player due to the limited resources and numbers on the Executive. The purpose of this document is to assist and to reach out to all of our volunteers and help provide guidelines for player development that will aid in enhancing the soccer experience for all youth players. The aim is to offer ideas for an organization-wide approach that will create the best possible environment for optimum player development.

This manual should help make coaching easier, while improving the experience of the players. Although the document does not cover all the possible questions people may have, it does discuss a wide scope of topics. The issues that were selected for inclusion in this manual were the ones that have the most impact on the way that players and coaches are trained and developed. The information is drawn from a variety of sources in this country and others. In other words, this is not speculation; it is simply a compilation of proven techniques that we, in Shelburne, can use to better our youth players' experiences.

SSC Objectives

1. To promote and improve organized soccer in Dufferin County. To foster among members, supporters and teams a genuine community spirit. To maintain and increase interest, in the game of soccer. To exercise a general direction and supervision while serving the interest of the constituent soccer players, parents and teams.
2. To plan, develop and maintain Club facilities independent of any municipality, with the intent to reduce overall Club expenses, free the Club of any political encumbrances and to promote the growth and development of soccer in Dufferin County.

The objectives listed above, mean that at the youth level, ***the player must come first***. Every decision made by the club and the coach should be in the best interest of the individual players.

Examples:

- 1) A youth player should not be kept in goal against his/her wishes just because he/she is the best keeper and the team needs him/her to win the game.
- 2) Coaches should not hold on to good players at a lower playing level just to help the team to win games. The better player should be allowed to move up to the next level in order to help him/her reach his potential, even if it means that the team he/she leaves behind will be weakened.
- 3) Every player must play in every game, not left to sit on the bench for the entire game because the team must win.
- 4) Young players should not be pigeon-holed into one position when young. Players should be given the chance to play multiple positions and develop various skills to make each player a better overall player.
- 5) When players are invited to play up, or for the District or Provincial Team, their club coaches should encourage them to go even if there is a conflict with a club activity. It is not fair to the

Shelburne Soccer Club

players to ask them to give up such opportunities in the name of team loyalty. The coach should help the player choose what is best for the player.

Our Club is committed to serving the player's ambition, not the other way around.

Playing in the Recreational Program is the first soccer experience for most players. It is also the program where most of the players will remain for their whole playing career. The primary objective of the Recreational Program is to instill a love of the game within each player, so that every player enjoys him or herself and develops enthusiasm for the sport. This positive experience can have far reaching effects on young children and has immeasurable value for players.

The problems seen in recreational programs across the Province and the Country are amazingly similar. They are often related to the fact that strong technical supervision is missing. The most common problems observed are:

- 1) Too much emphasis on kicking the ball aimlessly forward, with no specific purpose in mind. This is not conducive to skill development.
- 2) Too much emphasis on results, especially at the U-10 and U-12 level.
- 3) Players who are good enough for the competitive level are kept at the recreational level by coaches who want to win.
- 4) Parental behavior on the sidelines. Often parents are yelling directions loudly, bombarding players with too much information and, thus, resulting in young players not having the opportunity to grow out of their dependency on the adults.
- 5) Parental behavior on the sidelines. Often parents yell at young referees or coaches, demonstrating poor sportsmanship and decreasing the enjoyment of the game for everyone.
- 6) U-10 or U-12 recreational players learn best by playing small-sided soccer. This maximizes their opportunities for interaction with the play and the ball. This type of program originated in South America and is now followed worldwide.
- 7) Clubs have difficulty recruiting and maintaining volunteer coaches.
- 8) Due to lack of coach education, coaches do not have enough variety of activities to make the practices fun and effective.
- 9) Pre-game warm-ups are very poor, and do not prepare the players for the demands of the game.
- 10) Too many substitutions during games kill the flow and make games chaotic.

Shelburne Soccer Club

Recruiting and Educating Coaches

Convincing parents to volunteer to coach is always a challenge. There is no quick and easy way to find willing coaches. But the following improvements have been implemented by the Shelburne Soccer Club:

1) **Improve organization and communication**

The Club believes that parents will be more inclined to volunteer if they see that we are well organized. The Club is attempting to establish a support system that will provide the necessary resources and not abandon the coach to deal with the team problems on his/her own. If requested, we will provide support on game day to help manage parents or referees or any outstanding situations that may arise. Also, help coaches with parent communication and guide them how to organize the team most efficiently and how to communicate expectations to parents.

2) **Improve training**

It is in everyone's best interest to place a priority on coach education. Coaches will feel more relaxed and have more fun when coaching. Players will develop more and have more fun with educated coaches who are aware of age specific concerns and proven teaching methodology. Parents will be happier with the quality of the program the association is providing. One cannot over emphasize the important contribution that coaching education brings in creating an enjoyable and fulfilling experience for the players and the coaches. The Club has a responsibility to make sure that the coaches, in whose hands the players are entrusted, are as knowledgeable and well prepared as possible.

3) **Implement group training sessions**

If a coach never gets an opportunity to observe a quality practice session, the chances are he/she will never learn how to conduct one. Informed coaches are better able to understand, develop and challenge players. Uninformed coaches could de-motivate players and contribute towards player attrition. Many coaches themselves drop out of coaching due to frustration born out of lack of knowledge. No one wants to see players or coaches dropping out for any reasons, especially due to lack of enjoyment.

Overall Playing Format

The Ontario Soccer Association mandates small-sided play up to age 13 throughout the Province. Shelburne Soccer Club complies with this program and agrees that small-sided soccer is the best play to develop players and keep players having fun and involved in soccer. Small-sided soccer should make sure players are actively involved in the game and are given the chance to touch the ball more often and develop their skills. It is also important to note that small-sided games provide players with problems that are reasonable to solve and allows them more success to help build confidence.

Shelburne Soccer Club

Age Group Skill Priorities - U4

- Kicking, being comfortable with the ball

Age Group Skill Priorities - U-6

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch
- No kicking allowed except when shooting on goal

Age Group Skill Priorities - U-8

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch
- Introduce proper shooting technique
- Introduce controlling the ball with different parts of the body
- Emphasize the Triangle shape

General Description of What Should be Happening during Practice

No Lines. No laps. No Lectures. Attendance is still optional. Provided there is adequate supervision, children at this age should be allowed to come in and out of practice as they please. At this point, if you have not already done so, you may want to introduce some boundaries. However, don't allow the boundaries of the environment to hinder the training time by producing frequent stoppages of play because the ball goes "out of bounds." Try to keep the flow of the game going. Encourage informal play without pressure to "perform." Encourage the basic skills and give the players a lot of time with the ball. This will ultimately build their confidence. Make sure to always include games to goals.

Shelburne Soccer Club

General Information communicated to the players by the coach.

The coach/parent should be positive and encouraging of each child. Specific soccer-related information should be limited to basic ideas of how to best keep the ball from running out of bounds too often, as well as some simple ideas for maneuvering in tight spaces and past opponents. Coaches should exclude discussions about positions or other team concepts. When addressing technique, consider that kids learn much by watching and copying.

A good picture of proper technique can be a very powerful learning tool. Coaches should say things such as, "See if you can make it look like this." Limit time spent breaking down the mechanics. Instead, try to do most of your teaching of technique by offering a picture and then set up fun games where the objective of the game is for players to practice certain ways to control the ball. This approach allows the player a certain amount of freedom to develop their ball control and accept that there is more than one way of doing it. This is applicable at least through U-12.

Here are a few things to clarify with parents at the start of each season:

- 1) **The fields are laid out in such a way that has parents on the opposite sideline from players.** This can be easily done using signage and you will see an example of organization in the picture on page 33. We all agree that most players want their parents to be at the games, watching them play, and it creates a fun atmosphere. However keeping the parents on the opposite side of the field from the bench and at least 3 yards away from the action will enhance the players' sense of freedom and ease most of the intimidation any players might feel when the parents are right on top of them.
- 2) **The parents should not coach the players.** Parents should be encouraged to cheer good plays by their team and should also be encouraged to politely applaud good play by the other team.
- 3) **Parents must never tell the players to "kick" or "boot" the ball.** As discussed in the section on the skill priority, kicking the ball needs to be discouraged. The parents will need to be prepared to accept that a lot of the dribbling attempts will be unsuccessful and that, nevertheless, it is great for the players. Letting the players try again and again is the best thing for the players.
- 4) **The coaches should also keep their instruction to a minimum** and let the players understand that they must make their own decisions on the field. Coaches should be supportive and remember that making mistakes is part of the game. It must be remembered that we are trying to help the players grow out of their dependency on the adults. The coaches should encourage dribbling out of trouble and discourage kicking.
- 5) **All parent concerns should be discussed with the coach when the children are not present.** If parents do have concerns with how players are being treated or coaching methods, it is very important that the association clarify where concerns should be brought first and proper procedure for voicing concerns. Players should not be exposed to harsh comments or questions of any sort at any time.

Shelburne Soccer Club

AGE GROUPS U-10 AND U-12

Overall Playing Format

The Shelburne Soccer Club recognizes the importance of moving soccer development in our area forward. We believe that most players are technically, physically and tactically not ready for the 11v11 game until the U-14 level. This opinion corresponds with those of the professional youth coaches from the traditional soccer countries such as France, Holland, England, and Italy. These afore mentioned countries, which have an excellent reputation for successful player development, mandate small-sided play until U-12 and only recommend starting 11v11 at U-14. The fact is that many 11 and 12 year-olds struggle to cross a ball, switch the field, play a corner into the box, or even make a necessary run down the flank on a full-sized field. It is extremely important we ask children to perform tasks that they have a reasonable chance of accomplishing. Asking an 11 year-old to play a 45 yard ball accurately is not a reasonable request.

Volume of Activities

Coaches are encouraged to hold a practice separate from game day. U-10 and U-12 recreational players should have one game per week. Those players who do wish to train more than twice a week should be encouraged to join in the practices of a Travel Team or participate in a special clinic that the club offers similar to that which the club offers for the younger players. The practice length should be between 60 to 75 minutes for U10 and 75 to 90 minutes for U12. The practice should never exceed 90 minutes.

Skill Priorities

Dribbling should continue to be a stress for these age groups, however passing, receiving, and shooting should be stressed in practices as well. At this stage, players need to learn when to dribble out of trouble and when to pass. As always, aimless kicking should be discouraged. Players at the U-10/U-12 levels should be learning to combine with teammates around them, using short ground passes and wall passes to move the ball forward. Players should understand how to support teammates with the ball and be learning to recognize where defenders are not (and hence where to attack).

This may seem like a lot, but it is reasonable for players to learn these things if allowed to make mistakes and asked how to fix those mistakes at times. In practices, the coaches should ask the players how they could do things better and guide them to the correct answers without simply telling the players what is best. This will help the players learn how to solve problems on the field during games as well and reduce players' dependence on adults for guidance during the game.

Age Group Skill Priorities - U-10

Shelburne Soccer Club

- **Continue with dribbling foci**
- **Passing with inside and outside of both feet**
- **Shooting with both feet**
- **Receiving the ball with all parts of body**
- **Proper 1v1 defending**
- **Providing Offensive and Defensive support**

Age Group Skill Priorities - U-12

- **Continue with all U-10 foci**
- **Basic combination play**
- **Proper 2 vs. 2 defending**
- **Formations and roles of different positions**
- **Defensive strategies such as man to man, zone and the combination of them both**

General Description of What Should be Happening during Practice

As much as possible let players experience soccer through 3 v 3 to 5 v 5 games that last for no more than 10 or 15 minutes at a time. The small numbers allow the players to gain critical practice at 1 v 1 and 2 v 1 situations, while still allowing for the fun and feel of a soccer game. The time limit gives the players a predetermined amount of uninterrupted play, while also allowing an opportunity after 10 minutes for the players to refocus. At this age, players are typically ready for games or activities that help them learn when to play the ball sideways and backward. They also can begin to appreciate and enjoy playing the game skillfully.

General Information communicated to the players by the coach.

The coach should make comments that help players to stay involved and keep track of things without giving them all of the answers: "Join the game," "Find the ball," "Go get the ball," "Don't hide." The coach for this age group does not focus on positions, yet encourages everyone to take part in attacking and defending. Try to manage the amount of information or feedback your players are receiving immediately after practices or matches. In today's youth soccer landscape, kids at these ages are being overloaded with adult feedback and evaluation. Too much or inaccurate information can be counterproductive to your goals.

Shelburne Soccer Club

AGE GROUPS U-14 AND OLDER

Training Priorities and Volume of Practices

As players grow older into the high teens, having pre-set training priorities becomes a less effective approach. There are basic organizational and tactical topics the coach will want to cover so everyone knows how the team is trying to play. Once these are covered, coaches working with these age groups should base their decision regarding the practice topics on their team's performance in matches. In other words, the games will tell the coaches what they need to work on. For example, if the team is struggling with possession and the breakdowns are mostly technical, then the practices on the following week should be devoted to improving passing and/or receiving. If a team is allowing a large number of goals, then the team needs to focus on individual and team defense.

A special consideration at this age is that coaches must make practices fun, otherwise they will lose the players' attention or desire. Therefore, the best approach is to use game-like activities that create repetition of the topic and are enjoyable. Making things competitive, so that each person is trying to better their own performance is one way coaches can engage players. Using line drills or the same drills over and over again will bore these players very fast and they may lose interest in the game. Given this group now knows a bit about the game and have mouths that often voice that knowledge, it is very important that coaches at this level be educated. This will help make sure the players continue to have fun and benefit from the experience. It will also help make the experience fun for the coach. This age can be a challenging one if players need to create alternative entertainment for themselves during practice.

Age Group Skill Priorities - U-14 & up

Continue with foci of U-12

Team defense

Team offense

Coaching from the game

Travel Teams

The Select/Travel Program is geared toward players who have outgrown the House League Program and are looking for a more challenging soccer environment. Players who play at the select level usually have a personal goal, such as to play for the high school varsity team, or to play college soccer, or to become a professional player and play for the National Team. Hence, the main objective of the Select Program should be to help each player reach his/her potential and achieve his/her goal. This should be done in a fulfilling and supportive way that continues to foster the love of the game while helping players achieve their goals.