

Practices – A time to Learn, have fun and be inspired

Kids should always have a ball - kids in the age groups support by OYAA recreational soccer should never (and I believe this with all my heart) perform fitness without a soccer ball. Kids should not be doing leg lifts, pushups, sprints or running to a tree/garbage can/goal and back. There are so many ways to make soccer FUN, improve a player's soccer skills and instill respect, discipline and improve "fitness."

Practices should be

1. FUN
2. Motivating
3. Challenging
4. Age-Group Appropriate
5. Safe – build confidence

Practices (at all age groups) should always include the following components:

- (1) Preview - talk with the kids about the practice....get them going right away.
- (2) Juggling: encourage kids to practice at home
- (3) Dynamic stretching - avoid static, in a circle, standing still stretching. It's boring and not necessary. Have them skip, leg swings, lunges, squat jumps, walk on tippy toes, shuffle etc.
- (4) One Player - One ball activities: dribbling, juggling....they need to time to master the ball at their feet.
- (5) Tag Games or Relay races: promotes fun, positive competition as well as dynamic movements (change of speed/direction that are good for developing coordination, balance)
- (6) Small-sided games: 1v1, 2v2, 3v3 -- doesn't have to be even numbers; 2v1, 3v2, 4v5. Use multiple goals (attack 1 goal but defend two. Goals don't need to be nets (cones, players legs, target player)
- (7) Scrimmage: with NO instruction. Just let the kids play.
- (8) Static stretching at the end ... review the practice, preview what is next (game another practice)