

## **Typical Characteristics of Little Zephyr Players (U5-U7)**

- Focused on themselves – reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel.
- Unable to see the world from another’s perspective – it is “the world according to me” time. Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something is unrealistic.
- Everything is in the here and now – forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.
- Heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore.
- Enjoying playing, not watching – they feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Every player should have a ball in practice.
- Limited attention span (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions concise and to the point. When in an open environment, such as a park, their attention span will dwindle towards 10 seconds.
- Effort is synonymous with performance – if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm.
- Active imaginations – if we utilize their imaginations in activities, they will love practice!
- Look for adult approval – watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!”

- Unable to think abstractly – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic.
- Typically have 2 speeds -- extremely fast and stopped.
- Usually unaware of game scores – we should try to keep it that way.
- Often like to fall down just because it is fun – they are just children having fun
- Often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot – they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach them left and right.

### **Technical Development of U5-U7 players**

Fun, dribbling, and motor development (running, skipping, galloping, turning, jumping) should be the central soccer themes in practices. In order to become comfortable on the ball, players need to touch the ball as often as possible. The player should focus on dribbling skills, and the idea of passing and shooting can be introduced; however, maximizing touches on the ball while having fun is still the focus from a technical standpoint. Young players up through about middle school tell us they play soccer in order to have fun! What we must remember is that one of the main components of fun, according to young players, is seeing themselves improve at something. For this reason, helping them see their technical improvement when they make improvements and praising them for it is vital. It is important that each player be shown their own improvement and that we do not compare all players to the “best” player. We cannot stress enough that tactical instruction should be kept to a minimum at these ages.

## **Skill Priorities**

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past other players
- Soft first touch when receiving the ball

## **Coaching Points**

### **Dribbling**

- All surfaces of the foot.
- Change of speed.
- Proper use of soles of the feet to pull, push and roll the ball.
- Keep the ball close when under pressure (lots of touches).

### **Receiving**

- Eyes on the ball while it is traveling and as you receive it.
- Position body in-line with the in-coming ball.
- Present a surface to receive the ball with.

### **Passing**

- Use inside of foot.
- Swing through the ball.
- Non-kicking foot placed comfortably next to the ball.

- Non-kicking foot pointed in the direction of the target.
- Eyes on ball.
- Lock ankle with toe pointed up on kicking foot.
- Straight kick... Strike through the center (equator) or slightly above the center of the ball with the ankle surface of the foot.