

# Vilonia Soccer Coaching Manual



3/22/09

## **Practices**

Coaches should try and have at least one practice during the week. Practices should last at least an hour. The fields by the pavilion are available to practice on at any time or coaches are welcome to have practices at their homes or other locations.

Practices should be structured and organized and follow the same format each week.

### ***Warm up***

The practice should start with a structured stretching and warm up period. Players should line up in a straight line a full arms length apart from each other facing the coach. The coach should then lead them through various stretching exercises. The exercises should stretch out the quadriceps, hamstrings, groin and Achilles. In addition general warm up exercise such as jumping jacks, windmills, etc. The stretching/warm up can then be followed by a quick lap around the field (which give the coach time to set up the first drill). The stretching/warm up routine should be done the same way at each practice and before games.

### ***Equipment***

Small disk style cones are available at the park for use during practice and a game ball will be provided for each team to use during practice and for the games. Each child should be encouraged to bring at least one ball of the appropriate size for their age group, but any ball is better than no ball and if the player has more than one ball encourage the to bring it. Each player will need to have a ball to practice with.

### ***Teaching the Basics***

The first and most important thing to focus on is the proper way to kick the ball. The ball should be kicked with either the side of the foot or with the laces. The child's natural tendency is to kick the ball with their toe. While this feels natural to them and while they may claim to be able to "kick the ball really hard" this is not the proper technique. Kicking the ball with the side of the foot will give the player better control and also will not hurt as it will when they kick the ball with their toes.

The coach should be able to demonstrate the proper technique. When striking the ball you should stand slightly to the side of the ball opposite their kicking foot about 2 paces back. In one quick movement you should approach the ball, plant your non kicking foot along side the ball with the toe pointing in the direction of where you want the ball to go. You then strike the ball by turning your foot and hitting the ball dead center with the inside of the foot.

Initially the player may try and position themselves off to the side of the ball and swing their leg much like a golfer swinging at a golf ball which is incorrect.

To practice, have the player's line up a cross from each other and repeatedly kick the ball back and forth while you observe and instruct.

## **Barefoot practice**

At most practices you will have the kids wearing their soccer shoes and shin guards (mandatory). But occasionally you may want to hold a “Barefoot” practice. The world’s best players all perfected their game playing barefoot as a child. Playing barefoot will force the kids to start kicking the ball the proper way and will increase their natural touch and sense of where the ball is. During barefoot practices no player should be wearing shoes or shin guards. You should perform the same kinds of drills in the barefoot practice as you do in regular practices.

In addition you should encourage the parents of the plays to practice with the players at home barefoot.

## ***Drills***

The following pages contain detailed instructions for drill you can conduct in practices for each age level.

The older age groups should start with the drills for the younger age groups and then progress to the more complicated drill for their age groups.