



## AN INTRODUCTION TO COACHING 5-8 YEAR OLDS

A coaches' responsibility begins with children between 5 to 8 years. These children are being introduced to the world of football as a team sport and need to enjoy their time on the pitch if they are to continue playing the game as teenagers. Creating that love and passion for the game, in these young children, is the primary role of a grassroots coach.

You need to prepare each individual to play as a team, teach the absolute basics and create a level of interest – focusing primarily on ensuring fun & excitement for these individuals. Treat them right, and you will create a lasting impression in their lives. Some key aspects, for coaches to remember, are:

### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- There is very little physical difference in girls & boys, at this age
- The cardiovascular system & temperature regulation is less efficient than adults
- Training is limited to fundamental movement skills – including running, catching, turning, jumping, kicking, throwing, etc.
- Hand-eye or eye-foot coordination is immature, as is the general physical coordination, in these children
- Children have no sense of pace or intensity – They will always go FLAT OUT!!!

### MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

- An extremely active imagination
- Terribly short attention span
- They can only process small bits of information – long sequences are never processed
- They can only handle one task at a time – in problem-solving situations
- Rules need to be simple
- They are, psychologically, extremely sensitive

### SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Children, at this age, tend to be self-centred – It's always about "me, my and mine"
- There is little or no concern for the team – Group activities or collective play makes little sense
- There is a gradual development in self-concept or body-awareness through movement
- They need extremely generous praise and positive feedback
- They play football because it's fun – what better motivation do you need?

So the next time you decide to go out there and take charge of these young ones, arm yourself with a bit more information to make your day better.