

Wadsworth Amateur Soccer Association

Grizzly Cub Academy Director: Scott Simpson

U5/U6 Academy Manual

Mission Statement: *To maximize the athletic development of each player by providing fun, competitive, age-appropriate activities.*

Characteristics of U5/U6 Children

1. Short attention span.
 - Give one direction at a time.
 - Change activities often and smoothly.
 - Start the activity and make adjustments or add/repeat directions.
2. Most are individually oriented (me, my, mine). Don't share well.
3. Constantly in motion.
4. Psychologically easily bruised.
5. Little or no concern for *team* activities. Do not understand the *concept* of a team.
6. Physical and psychological development for boys and girls quite similar.
7. Eye/hand or eye/foot coordination most primitive.
8. Love to run and jump.
9. Catching skills not developed.
10. Can balance on good foot.
11. No sense of pace. (Go flat out.)
12. Equate effort with performance. If they are playing hard, they think they are playing well.
13. Body heats quickly. Need short, frequent breaks in warm weather.
14. Need MOVEMENT EDUCATION. Need to learn to control their bodies.
15. Need to learn to deal with bouncing, rolling balls. Need to learn qualities of balls/bodies in motion.

Academy Activities

Rolling Moves – (this move is one of the **core skills** for u5/u6 players to begin to learn). 1st rolling move is putting your foot on the ball and roll it behind you, turn, and go get it – repeat it several times. Other directions to roll ball – forward, sideways. Players should use this move to avoid other players, not let the ball go out of play, and to turn around and go opposite direction.

Circle Moves – (this move is one of the **core skills** for u5/u6 players to begin to learn). 1st circle move is the outside of the foot circle around the ball, then dribble away in opposite direction. (this move is known as the 'scissors' move). Players should use their little toe to make a circle around the ball (fake in that direction) and then dribble away in opposite direction. 2nd circle move is the inside of the foot circle around the ball (also called a 'step-over'), then turn back towards the ball and dribble away.

GATE DRIBBLING—(Dribbling for speed/possession) (The implications for soccer are in the parenthesis). Have players dribble between gates. Use one more gate than there are players. In 90 seconds, count the number of gates you dribbled through. Can you increase your total by 2? "Show me what moves you used to change direction. ...to change speed." Incorporate skill moves being taught – rolling the ball and circle moves.

BEEP! BEEP! (This activity improves dribbling, vision and body control.) Can you dribble your ball in this confined area and when you get close to another person honk your horn. As you dribble, try to avoid other people. Stay in the area and keep the ball close to your feet. Put your foot on the ball and roll it to avoid collisions with other players or before the ball goes out of play. Can you go a little fast because you are on the freeway. When the coach yells "Stop" freeze with your foot on your ball; hold out your hands and make sure you can't touch another player.

Body Part Dribble—(This activity develops dribbling and stopping the ball with different body parts to learn how to twist and turn the body for improved coordination). Can you dribble inside the square. Coach will call out different parts of the body to stop the ball with. Foot. Hand. Elbow. Try to keep your balance. Stomach. Shoulder. ("You have to twist on that one.") Head. Bottom. Next, the coach will call out two parts of the body to use to stop the ball. Both knees. Both hands. One shoulder, one elbow. Can you figure this out? One knee, opposite elbow. Knee and shoulder!!

Random Cone Dribble—(This activity helps players change speed and direction with the ball). The players will learn how to start and stop. Their body balance and agility will improve. Dribble the ball in and out of the cones, but don't let your ball touch any of the cones. Try to use both feet. Try to use different parts of your foot to change the direction and speed of the ball. How fast can you go without hitting the cones? Can anyone show us how they went around the cone quickly? What part of your foot did you use? Count how many cones you can dribble around. Now we will see who can dribble around all 7 cones the fastest.

Same activity, but now we will engage the players in setting the rules of the game. This gives them ownership of the game. What should be the rule about touching the cones? Should it count? You get a point if you dribble around a cone, but it doesn't count if you touch a cone. Is that the rule you want for this game? Count out loud. Shout out your number. How many can you dribble around in 30 seconds? What's the rule about touching the cones? Can you break your record?

BATTLESHIPS—(This activity introduces to players how to pass off the dribble. It will aid the children in being able to see a target and pass to it). Each of those cones is a battleship and you destroy it by passing and hitting the cone with your ball. Make a noise so we know when you blew up a battleship. Can you go faster and still keep the ball close? How many battleships can you blow up in 30 seconds?

Heading--(Elementary heading) Run with the ball in your hands until you approach a gate. Toss the ball gently to your own head and using your forehead, head the ball thru the gates. How many can you do in 90 seconds? Be limited in time on this activity. Heading is a skill that comes later. Should not be a threatening situation at this age.

Coaching Tip—When you are finished with activities involving cones, use the players to help collect them. Children this age are eager to help. Try to make it a game. “Can you dribble around and pick up the cones without losing control of your ball?”

“GET OUT OF HERE.”—(Speed dribbling) Coach has a pile of balls at his feet. Coach kicks or throws balls out in all directions. Players should chase a ball and dribble it back to the pile. Do not let the pile get down to zero! (Speed dribbling) Players win if they can keep at least one ball in the coach’s pile. Coach wins if he empties the pile.

Dribbling to a goal – (This activity will help players dribbling in a specific direction – towards the goal). Have one goal at the end of the area/field. All the players are around the coach with their ball. The coach will kick each ball away in a different direction. Each player will go get his/her ball and then go score a goal. They get their ball and return to the coach. The coach should move to different areas of the field to create different angles/directions for the players to dribble to the goal from. Players can also throw-in the ball and then go get it. Coach can send two players with one ball to create a 1v1 game to the goal – either of the players can score.

Ball Retrieval -- (Movement education; using different surfaces to dribble). Each player hands their ball to the coach who tosses the balls in different directions about 15 feet away. “Bring the ball back with your hands. Next, bring the ball back with your hands, but you can’t pick the ball up. Bring the ball back with your favorite foot... with the other foot (Can you go faster?) ... alternating feet to touch the ball ...with the outside of your feet. ...with the soles of your feet. ...only with your left foot. Can you think of another body part to use? (head, elbow, heel, stomach, nose—ouch!) With more difficult body parts, keep distances smaller.

BAG, BOTTLE, BIB and BALL—In each of four corners of a grid, place a bag, a bottle, a bib and a ball. Players dribble their balls in the area and on the coach’s command, players must dribble their ball to whichever object the coach commands. Coach calls out “BAG!” and players dribble to the bag. Don’t be the last! (**Speed dribbling/competition**)

HIT THE COACH! – (dribbling and passing), Coach walks around the area. Players must focus on location of coach as they dribble and prepare ball to shoot. Score by hitting the coach below the knees. How many goals can you score in 1 minute?

Two coaches hold a stick of a shirt stretched between them about waist high. This creates a goal. Players score by passing the ball between the coaches and under the stick(shirt) to their partner. Coaches are walking about the area. Players pass to each other or dribble and get in position to receive a pass thru the “goal.” How many can your team score in 3 minutes? (Passing)

SHADOW TAG—Players dribble in an area. Try to tag another player by stepping on their shadow. Call out their name if you tag them. If tagged you must *do “Happy Feet.”* Tap on top of the ball with your feet three times alternating left and right as fast as you can. (Demonstrate.) Then resume dribbling and try to tag someone else.(Dribbling away from pressure/Competitiveness/Agility)

“WHO CAN DO THIS?” (my personal favorite!). Throw the ball in the air, clap once and catch it. Same, but catch it with one hand. Clap twice and catch the ball. Can you do a roll or circle move? Drop ball, kick one time, catch it. Drop ball, hit with thigh, catch it. Toss ball up in air, head it, catch it. Stand on one foot, throw the ball in the air and catch it. Can you balance on one foot? Can you hop on one foot? Can you hop and change feet without stopping? Can you go forward/backward/sideways while hopping? Can you skip? Can you jump and turn 180 degrees in the air? Can you jog backwards? Can you jog sideways? Can you create a movement for the rest of us to copy? Any skill or movement is good here. (Movement education/balance/agility)

FREEZE TAG--Coach picks two players who must chase players who are dribbling with balls and tag them. Players must freeze and can’t move until “unfrozen.” Pick different ways to unfreeze players; tag them, pass ball between legs, crawl between legs, etc (Dribbling for possession/agility)

Sharks and Minnows. Players line up with balls on one line. They must dribble across the field to the other line before being the sharks can capture their ball. When caught, the player must be a shark. (Dribbling for penetration)

Play the same game with **alligators** who lie on their stomachs as the other half of the players dribble in the area. Alligators must hit balls with their hands. Can dribblers tempt and taunt the alligators? An important rule: Do not kick the ball into another player!! Don’t try this activity unless you can trust that players will act appropriately.

PIRATE-- (Dribbling for possession/shielding). Players dribble in an area. The coach will pick a "pirate." "Whoever has on black socks is a pirate." The pirate will leave their ball and try to kick other player's balls out of the area. Keep changing pirates. "Whoever has on glasses... Whoever is wearing a blue shirt... Whoever has a first name that begins with M... There may be 2 or 3 pirates at one time. When your ball is kicked away, retrieve it and come back. Teach players to shield using their bodies and their arms.

Players dribble in an area. On one clap, change speeds. (Demonstrate how to change from slow to fast. Dribble a few yards at increased speed and then slow down again.) One two claps, change directions. (Demonstrate different ways to change directions. Who can come up with the best way? Who can come up with the "funkiest" way to change speed or change direction?) On three claps stop and put your forehead on the ball. Next time, use colors for commands. "When I shout blue, you must change directions." "When I shout purple, you must freeze like a kangaroo with one foot on the ball." (Dribbling for possession and penetration)

Same game, but as you change speed or change directions you must look toward the coach and shout out how many fingers are being held up. Try to be first and the loudest. "One!" "Four" "Fist" "Baseball hat" Players must now learn to look when dribbling and changing speed and changing directions. (Dribbling with vision)

One pair plays against another pair. There is one ball. The first pair is given the ball and the other pair tries to take it away and keep it. Like musical chairs, the team that has the ball at the end of time (90 seconds) wins a point. (Dribbling for possession)

SIMON SAYS—Play with and without the ball. From this activity children will learn listening skills and concentration. Simon says "Jump over the ball. Jump sideways. (Simon didn't say to jump sideways. Go to the back of the group.) Simon says "Run around the ball. Run around in the other direction.

Do This. Do That—An activity similar to Simon Says but requires greater concentration and alertness. If coach says, "Do this" do it; when coach says "Do that" don't do it. Coach raised both hands above her head and says "Do this." Coach holds hands out to the side and says "Do that." Coach makes other body movements (with and without the ball) and says either "Do this" or "Do that." Go to the back of the group, but remain part of the activity.

RED LIGHT! GREEN LIGHT!—Play first without a ball, then with a ball. "What rules shall we make when playing with the ball?" With a ball at their feet, players try to get to the coach. Coach turns his back to the players and calls "Green Light." Players dribble toward coach. Coach calls "Red Light" and turns back toward the players. If he catches a player or the ball moving, that player is sent back to the line.

Small-sided Games:

Divide teams into two groups putting bibs on one team. Teams scored by kicking the ball between the cones or into the goal. For these small-sided games, don't be strict on out-of-bounds. Coach has a collection of balls near midfield and keeps the game moving. The coach is "Boss of the Soccer Balls". No need for throw-ins or corner kicks. Keep the game moving. Use two balls to break up the pack and to give less involved players some success. Just teach them their direction to go when they have the ball and to come back and win the ball back when they do not have it. Encourage and reward dribbling. Don't be trying to "demand" passing, team shape, combination play, etc. The goal is to get players comfortable with the ball at their feet and adventurous in dribbling past defenders.

Here is a sample practice plan:

Warm-up; Skill Moves: rolling ball and circles (these need to be done at every practice/game). Gate Dribbling.

Activities:

1. Score a goal by hitting the coach below the knees.
2. Score a goal by passing under the shirt held by two coaches.
3. "Bring back your ball with your hands (rolling it on the ground) ...with your head; elbows; knees; head, stomach.
4. "I can do this. Can you do this?"
5. Get out of here! Try not to allow the pile of balls at coach's feet to disappear.
6. PIRATE!
7. Bag, Bottle, Bib or Ball
8. Play 1v1, 2v1, 2v2 and/or 3v3 to two small goals.

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U7/U8 Academy Manual

Mission Statement: *To maximize the athletic development of each player by providing fun, competitive, age-appropriate activities.*

Characteristics of U7/U8 Children

1. Attention span beyond U6, but still not extended
 - Can only absorb a couple of directions at a time.
 - Start the activity and make adjustments or add/repeat directions.
2. Like U6 players, they are still in motion
3. Use activities that involve PAIRS
4. Still very sensitive and dislike personal failure in front of others.
5. Beginning to develop physical coordination
6. Still love to run, jump, climb, roll and skip
7. Still lack sense of pace and go flat out.
8. Equate effort with performance. If they are playing hard, they think they are playing well.
9. Body heats quickly but need fewer breaks than U6s, but breaks need to be a bit longer

Academy Activities

ISLAND DRIBBLE - In a confined space, each player has a ball. The coach challenges the players with different dribbling styles. This activity develops dribbling, vision and body control. "Stay on the Island." What part of the foot can you dribble the ball with? The inside of the foot. Good, try it. The outside of the foot. Keep the ball close. Laces (top of the foot). Sole (bottom of the foot). Toe. Heel. Six surfaces (top, bottom, inside, outside, front, back.) Using your right foot, use all six surfaces. Can you use your left foot and use all six surfaces?

GATES (Maze Game/Dribbling w/ vision) - Set out 7 gates using cones about 2 yards apart. (One more gate than players.) Ask players to see how many gates they can dribble thru in one minute.
- Ask each player for their number.
- Ask them to go faster and see if they can improve their total by 2.
- Demonstrate a change of speed and/or direction move and have them use it before they move to new gate.
- Add conditions. Can only dribble with the right foot, left foot only, inside of foot, outside...

GATES IN PAIRS - Each player gets a partner. A coach or helper can go with the odd player. To score, player must now pass the ball thru the gate to their partner. You may not pass thru the same gate twice without going to another gate first. Which pair is the winner?

GAULENT – This 1v1 activity improves dribbling, changing directions and speeds. Make 3 large areas in a row (about 10x10). Put one defender in each box, the defender must stay in their box, and try to kick away the ball when a player comes in their box. All other players start at the 'top' of the 1st area. Players go one at a time and try to dribble through all three boxes without getting their ball kicked out of the area. If their ball is kicked out of the area by a defender, they get the ball and go back to start. Players earn 1 point if they make it through all three areas successfully. The next player is allowed to go when there is no ball in the first box (the coach should be here sending players in asap). There should always be more than one player trying to get through the gauntlet but only one player allowed in the 1st box. Add new defenders every 2/3 minutes. Encourage players to use 'moves' to get by defenders.

TURNING - This activity improves close control, changing direction, acceleration and vision. Let the players be creative and show the group different ways to turn with the ball. Players will dribble their balls and when the coach says, "Change," change directions. "How did you do it.? The inside of your foot. Very good!" Show me another way. "Step on ball to stop it, step in front of the ball and turn." Try it walking.

THREE POINTS - This activity impacts close control, changing direction, acceleration and vision. Players should dribble their balls, stay on the island and do not bump into anyone. If they do, they lose a point. When the coach calls "Switch," players leave their ball and find another player's ball to dribble. When the coach says "Stop" if you can hold you hand out and touch another player, you lose a point.

DRIBBLING WITH VISION - Players dribble their balls and when the Coach calls out "Change direction" the players change direction and then look for the coach and YELL out the number of fingers he is holding up. Same for the command to "Change speed." "What surfaces are you using?"

COACH IS THE GOAL (Target Game/Dribbling & passing w/ vision) - The coach and the helper hold an end of a bib with outstretched arms making a goal between them. In pairs, players must dribble around and pass the ball between the coaches and under the outstretched bib to score. The coaches move about quickly changing directions and the angle of the goal.

BALL RETRIEVAL IN PAIRS (speed dribbling) - Players are in pairs with one ball. One player hands the coach a ball and he/she throws in about 20-25 yards away. The coach call out a number from 2-10. The players must return the ball to the feet of the coach with that EXACT number of touches. The pair must solve the problem of how to that quickly. The next condition is that the players must alternate touches.

MATH DRIBBLE - This activity teaches problem solving, split-second decision making, cooperation with teammates and help the players with mental focus during play. Players dribble in an area. The coach will call out a number and the players will dribble with their balls making a group with that number of players. Balls should touch. Do it as quick as you can. Stay in the grid. "2" "1 plus 1" "7 minus 3."

KING OF THE JUNGLE - You will need a bib for each player. Players will stuff a bib in the back of their pants so that it hangs down to about the back of the knees. Each player will dribble their ball in a confined area. Players try to grab the bib of another player. You can't leave your ball; you must be within about two steps of your ball when grabbing another player's bib. When all bibs have been taken, the player who has the most bibs in his/her hand wins.

Pinnie Tag (Target Game/Dribbling w/ vision) - Players dribble their balls in a confined area. The player that is IT holds a bib in his/her hand. They also dribble their ball. When they touch another player, they drop the bib. The tagged player is IT and must pick up the bib and try to tag another player. Play a similar game, but this time the player who is IT does not have a ball to dribble and must try to take the ball from another player. When they have done so, they drop the bib. You can go right to this game if the sun is not out.

JUGGLING - Take the ball in your hands. Can you go from your thigh to your head and catch? Can you go from your head to your thigh and catch? Can you drop it on your foot and catch? Both feet? What other body-part can we use? Shoulder? How many touches with your foot can you get in a row? Use a bounce between touches? In pairs, can you touch it from your foot and have your partner catch it? See how far your players can go. Give them a target to shoot for when they go home.

STEAL THE BACON - Make two lines of players facing each other. Each player has a number on each line. Coach rolls out a ball and calls out a number. "Number 2!" The number 2 player from each line runs to the ball and tries to get it and (1) score at their goal; (2) score at any goal; (3) dribble the ball back to their line. The other player tries to prevent this and attempts to steal the ball and score. Try to roll balls out in such a manner as to avoid direct collisions with both players arriving at the same time and "head-on." Make them arrive at angles and maybe one player arriving sooner. You can also throw out bouncing balls. Players should get experience in dealing with bouncing balls.

PASSING WITH PACE - Can you pass your ball from this line and have it "KISS" the cone. Try to get the ball to stop right at the cone or gently touch it and stay close. (Can also use a ball, a bag, coaches feet, etc.) Looking for pace. Place some cones up-side-down and put a long distance away. Can you hit the cones from a distance? Looking to improve strength of kicking.

TRIANGLE GOAL - Place three cones in the middle of the field in a triangle. Make groups of 3 to 4 players, one ball. Players score by kicking the ball across two lines of the triangle. When players have the ball, they must decide whether to dribble, pass to a teammate or shoot. All teams shoot at the same goal. Coach keeps score and decides when a ball is out of play.

DRIBBLING TO CHANGE SPPEED AND CHANGE DIRECTION - Have the players dribbling in a confined area. When the coach claps once, the players CHANGE SPEED. Show them techniques for changing speed going from slow to fast. They will dribble fast for a few yards and then slow down again. When the coach claps twice, the players CHANGE DIRECTION. Show them techniques for changing direction. Have them show the group their move for changing directions.

Then the coach will alternate between one clap and two claps. Add another element—VISION. When the coach claps, he will hold up a number of fingers and as the players are changing speed and changing direction, they must look to the coach, see how many fingers he has up and call out the number very loud. Now they are dribbling (changing speed and changing direction) and having to get their heads up and look.

CLEAN YOUR YARD - One team of players is on one side of the half-line and the other players are in the other half. To win, one side must "clean their yard" or pass all the balls into the other half of the field. When one team has "cleaned their yard" they win. Help one team if it becomes too lopsided. Play a few games. You can add restrictions like the players must start at the back line and dribble toward the middle and then pass their ball to the other side. OR all of the balls are lined up on the back line and the players sit back to back on the center-line and when the coach yells go, they must go their balls, dribble toward the middle and pass to the other side. Think of some goofy starts.

BE FIRST TO THE BALL - Have pairs of players stand around the coach. Each pair has one ball. Coach points to a pair. They give their ball to the coach who serves in on the ground or in the air about 15-20 feet away. The partners chase it with the first one to touch the ball winning a point. Play the best out of 5 wins. Balance the teams. Keep changing partners putting winners with winners and keep them in those pairs for a few rounds.

SIAMESE SOCCER - This activity develops cooperation between partners and helps to improve their communication skills. Playing in pairs is the beginning of teamwork. Two players hold hands and have a ball at their feet. They are IT. All other players are in pairs also holding hands but they do not have a ball. Make a small grid and make all players stay in that grid. The pair with the ball must dribble their ball while holding hands and try to hit another pair with the ball. Try having the IT pair dribble two balls. When a pair is hit, they get a ball and they are also IT, so there are two pairs that are IT. The pairs that are IT can work together.

SIAMESE SOCCER II - This variation of the above activity focuses more on passing skills. Let every pair have a turn being Siamese Twins. Two players have a ball and are IT. They do not need to hold hands, but try to hit the other players with their one ball. The other players are no longer holding hands. They way should work together is to wait until one player without the ball is on the other side of the player being stalked so that when one partner attempts to pass and hit a player, her partner will get the ball if there is a miss.

HOSPITAL TAG - This activity develops the dribbling skills of changing direction and speed while competing. The players dribble inside the grid and try to tag someone. They must keep the ball close to them when they tag a player. If a player gets tagged on the elbow, she must hold that spot and continue to play and try to tag other without getting tagged. When a player is tagged for a second time, they must hold that spot with their other hand and continue. When they are tagged for the THIRD time, they must go to the hospital and the "Doctor" will give them an exercise to get healed. "Touch you forehead to your ball. You're healed. Go back in." Tap your feet on the ball six times, juggle one time, etc.

FREEZE TAG - This activity improves dribbling and passing skills while evading opponents. Two or three players are IT. If they tag a player they are frozen and they must freeze, put their hands out and wait to be unfrozen. Players are unfrozen by passing a ball between the legs of the frozen player.

BLIND MICE - This activity develops cooperation between partners and helps to improve their communication skills. Playing in pairs is the beginning of teamwork. Players get in pairs and hold hands. One partner closes his/her eyes. Both are dribbling a ball and the "seeing" person must communicate with the non-sighted person. Put out large gates for players to dribble through.

SOCCER MARBLES - This activity improves passing accuracy and pace. Players are in pairs, each with a ball. One player tries to hit his partner's ball. If she does, she gets a point. Players can't stop any ball and can only touch their own ball. First partner to 4 wins or play for 2 minutes and the player with the most points wins. Have parents help to keep balls in the area. Start with ball only a couple of yards apart.

THREE GOALS - This is a 2v2 scrimmage. Put 3 balls on top of 3 cones, these are the goals. Players score by hitting one of the balls off the cone. Let them play continuously. The goals should be at the ends of the fields, but not on the lines. Players should be able to play behind the goals (like hockey).

FOUR GATES - This game can be played as a 2v2 or 3v3 or 4v4 game. It requires the players to scan the playing field to determine where to attack. It requires group cooperation and passing and receiving skills to keep possession of the ball. There are four gates and a parent is placed at each gate. When the coach points to a parent, they step inside the gate and the gate is closed. You cannot score at a closed gate. The coach will "point" to open and close the gates.

4 v 4 GAME - Play a 4v4 game using different scoring methods. Keep the game moving!

Dribble ball across the end-line.

Stop the ball on the end-line.

Play to two small goals while defending two small goals.

Play to two small goals going in the direction of the small width of the field.

Play to two larger goals.

Each pass is a point; scoring on goal is two-points. First team to 21 points wins.

Here is a sample practice plan:

Warm-up; Skill Moves: rolling ball and circles (these need to be done at every practice/game).

Activities:

1. Gate Dribbling.
2. Island Dribbling.
3. Gaulent.
4. Who can do this?
5. Clean the Yard!
6. Siamese Soccer
7. 4v4 Game.
8. Small sided games – 1v1, 2v2, 3v3, etc.