



The Grassroots football session Age-Under (6 to 12) - I

Introduction

Grassroots football is not limited to festivals and tournaments; it is also organised as a training activity as part of the children's facilities offered by clubs as well as school and community associations. Even within these facilities, where football practice is very structured, the training session must never overlook the children's need to play. Alongside its pedagogical aims of initiating, learning or refining football techniques, according to the age group, the training session must also offer children a setting where they can express themselves and develop through play.

The FIFA grassroots programme can be developed in every environment (schools, communities and even clubs), for children (boys and girls) between 6 and 12 years old. Few points of grassroots football philosophy are-

- Everyone has the opportunity to play
- Football can be played anywhere
- There is no discrimination
- The game must be simple, exciting and rewarding
- Fair play must be respected.

Who is involved in FIFA grassroots programme?

The FIFA grassroots programme, which is implemented in close cooperation with the member associations, involves everybody concerned with children's education in the participating countries (governments, NGOs, stakeholders, communities, schools, etc.)

Fun/Education: For many children all around the world, football is the main form of entertainment, social integration and free expression. The game is the best teacher and enjoyment of players should always be the main focus in development of this programme. The action of the educator must be dynamic, simple, exciting and rewarding and the physical, physiological and psychological characteristics of the children must always be respected.

Objective and exercises

First impressions are always important for children: for this reason, the coach-educator must be acquainted with all the exercises and should prepare the session in advance with specific objectives. The training sessions must be tailored to the participants' abilities. The coach-educator must get the message across to the children that they are genuinely achieving something. This realisation will make the session all the more pleasant and full of opportunities for play and learning. However, the coach-educator must be prepared to adapt the session and exercises if he/she considers that changes will improve the children's motivation and involvement. Here are a few questions to guide a coach-educator when preparing a training session:

Objectives:

According to FIFA's vision "touch the world" the main objectives of the FIFA grassroots programme are:

- To bring the game to the people.
- To let as many people as possible play football, interact with others, share human values, and most importantly, have fun playing football.
- To introduce football to boys and girls.

Exercises:

1. How many children will take part in the session?
2. Will the children enjoy the games and exercises?
3. Will they learn anything?
4. What are the best games and exercises to achieve the objectives of the session?
5. Are the levels of the games and exercises suited to the children's abilities?
6. Can children explain and demonstrate the games and exercises in a clear, precise way so that the children will understand?
7. Do the children have enough equipment for this session? If not, can children adapt the session to the equipment available?
8. Is there enough space to carry out the prepared games and exercises?

Parents support

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for the team, but the U-8 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that address at this meeting are:

1. A means of contacting everyone without one person doing all of the calling. (Phone chains.)
2. Choosing a team administrator-someone to handle all of the details.
3. Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
4. Discuss the laws of the game.
5. Carpool needs.
6. Training and game schedules

7. What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards (Cleats are not mandatory.)
8. Most importantly, the philosophy about coaching U-8 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.

FIFA grass root sessions

Main objectives of the session:

- To play football
- To learn
- To have fun

The idea is to “learn to play by playing”

The main part will consist of games and exercises; they have to be mixed and, most importantly, cover the objectives the coach educator has set for the session. The focus of the sessions must be on games played in small teams – Small-sided games.

The game

- The game gives great joy to children.
- Presents fundamental and simple situations, accessible to all the children and related to their motivations.
- The grassroots approach to football has the following characteristics:
 1. It is a game
 2. It is presented in played forms
 3. It is simplified and adapted to the characteristics of the child
 4. It offers the two fundamental situations in football; playing with and against others.

Profile of the coach educator

The coach-educator's interest centres on the child. The coach-educator's main, essential mission is to ensure the child's development in -

- sporting,
- social,
- psychological and
- educational terms.

The coach-educator knows the game and knows the players. Of course, a coach-educator will not know everything, even in his/her own subject. However, the coach-educator must have a very good understanding of the messages to be communicated. Victories and defeats are nothing compared with what football can promote in terms of human and social values. Football is a vital aid in training future citizens and encouraging young people's inclusion in society. Football can be a marvellous tool in conveying such values as respect, solidarity, mutual support, sharing, etc

The coach educator: Main functions

1. Uses activities as a tool to shape and develop participants
2. Helps participants develop according to their development level
3. Helps young participants to mould themselves as men/women
4. Is a support, guide, mentor and role model
5. Has to be willing to listen to the young participants
6. Dealings with the player's families, schools
7. Assumes all pedagogical duties
8. Handles all areas of training: technical, tactical, physical and mental
9. First aid and security
10. The game is the best teacher

The coach educator has to focus on coaching children playing football, rather than coaching football players.

Structure of the training session

In order to fulfill its dual objective, the session must be structured in such a way that it alternates between games and exercises based on the global-analytical-global (GAG) method.

Warm-up

At the start of the session, a game related to football is recommended for opening the session. Neuromuscular coordination with and without the ball must always take place immediately after the game of football and make up the second part of the warm-up. The opening stage of the session must not exceed 15 minutes.

First game

The first stage of the session's key part is made up of one or two themed games which will highlight the main objective of the session. During this part, the coach-educator emphasises the main subject by intervening and giving guidance, thus identifying the session's theme. The first game lasts 15 minutes.

Exercises and drills

Once the children have identified the objective through the game, analytical exercises will ensure that the technical move is repeated and certain details corrected. The coach educator's input during this analytical part of the session is very important as he/she must demonstrate, observe, correct and encourage. The length of the analytical part is 12-15 minutes.

Second game

The second game can be directed and/or free and must offer children the possibility of applying what they have practised in real "match" situations. During this part of the session, the coach-educator gives the children more freedom to express themselves by letting them play without intervening too much. This game will be the longest game of the session (20-25 minutes).

Cool-down

The "cool-down" part must fulfill its low-intensity objectives while also satisfying the children's need to play. It must therefore be composed of one or two low-intensity games. The length of the cool-down is 5-10 minutes. The alternation of the global and analytical methods can be repeated once or twice during a session for the same theme.

Basic techniques of football

Ball control is the foundation for all aspects of the game and a source of motivation for young players because it feels good to be at ease with the ball. The ability to control the ball is the key to many other skills, and juggling is also a very good way to practice ball control, getting familiar with the ball and gaining confidence. Generally speaking, it is not difficult to master a technical skill, but it does become harder as the game conditions change. Therefore, a player can only master the technique of controlling the ball if he coordinates the various parts of his/her body. Furthermore, the learning aspect depends on the number of repetitions, whereas there are various combinations available in terms of the method to be used. As a young player develops, his/her technical skills will set the foundations for good development and enables him/her to experience all of the joy that football can bring.

In grassroots football, the basic techniques can be divided into five categories:

1. Controlling/ tapping the ball
2. Running with the ball
3. Passing the ball
4. Shooting
5. Heading

1. Controlling the ball

A. Controlling

To control the ball is to master it. Properly controlling the ball means that a move will be successful. The control movements to focus on are: directed control and gathering the ball while moving – these
Introduce speed into the play.

B. Juggling

If repeated regularly, juggling develops the skills of dexterity, coordination and balance in young footballers. These skills favour the more rapid acquisition of other techniques.

2. Running with the ball

A. Running with the ball

This is how an individual moves in free space with the ball. When a player is running well with the ball, he/she are in control of it at all times: this requires good balance and excellent stability. Running with the ball while keeping the head up allows a continuous flow of information to be received and

allows movement to be adapted to play.

B. Dribbling

This is how an individual moves with the ball when faced by opponents/obstacles. Dribbling allows the player in possession of the ball to eliminate one or more opponents by:

- making a manoeuvre and taking individual risks;
- setting up a team move;
- gaining time to allow support from team-mates;
- deceiving an opponent (the concept of the feint).

3. Passing the ball

This is the action of giving the ball to a team-mate. It is an essential part of team play. As the core of the game, passing allows a team to:

- keep possession of the ball;
- set up attacks;
- change the direction of play;
- counter-attack;
- provide a decisive or final pass.

Crosses are a type of short or long pass, usually leading to a shot. They serve as the last pass.

4. Shooting

This is an action with the objective of dispatching the ball into the opponent's goal. It is the logical conclusion, the culmination of an attack. It is what football is all about. Shooting requires technical qualities (striking the ball well, accuracy), physical qualities (power, coordination, balance) and mental qualities (determination, audacity, self-confidence).

5. Heading

The ability to head the ball is a vital skill to have - whatever positions the player play in. The forehead is the safest and most effective part of the head to use. So get them into the best position and get the timing of their headers right.

Conclusion

Playing is the great joy of childhood; it is through play that children can be themselves. Playing activities are a proven means of developing various aspects of physical, emotional and mental behaviour. The concept of competition is not eliminated, but it is essential that the competitive structures presented are suited to the children's behavioural characteristics. The approach is to offer simple, basic situations that are accessible by the children and match their motivation. At this stage of training, the best coaches should be employed for the children, idealize their actions and performance. A special teaching method should be used here. At this age, the young player learns optically.