

Coaches' Corner – The Player Selection Process

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Tryouts are a difficult time for you, the coach. But, for all the stress you feel it's ten-fold for the player and their parents.

In this article, I will give coaches- both first-timers and veterans- of U11/U12 teams some tips to alleviate as much of the "pain" associated with the tryout process.

- (1) Have a written coaching philosophy. Your coaching philosophy has been influenced through life experiences in and out of sport, teachers, parents and coaches you've played for and assisted. It is important that you understand the philosophy of the club relevant to the team you are coaching. What is the goal? Why are you the best candidate? How will you determine playing time? Where does winning fall on the player development scale? Have copies available to handout to parents.
- (2) Understand the selection process for your team relative to other teams within the club. You may be the designated "A" or "B" team coach which will impact your decision-making process differently than in a club that announces all the coaches in the age group with no designation. Club should identify two coaches who will work together over the next two years to develop the top 22-26 players. Once the two coaches agree on who those players are, the two teams should be split evenly either on the basis of skill or commitment level (i.e. other sports). The teams should train together throughout the year a minimum of every third practice to ensure appropriate competition level and an optimal training environment. As a side note to club DOC's- if coaches have a mock draft after tryouts, you will be able to evaluate their player identification/evaluation skills as well as their ability to develop those players over the next two years. U13 a true "A" team should emerge.
- (3) Determine the tryout process in advance. One of the difficulties with pre-determining the activities is not knowing how many kids will show up, but you should have a pretty good idea. At this age, activities that result in hard data (e.g. 40-yard time, height, weight) are inappropriate. In fact, the data may only get you in trouble when you don't take the fastest or biggest player when you realize they can't play. Let them play. Start with small-sided games (3v3, 4v4) and work your way up to 8v8. Coaching is largely subjective at this age selecting a player based primarily on physical traits is improper.
- (4) Because you are focused on evaluating players, it is important you understand the check-in procedures, who will do it and where, as well as any fees or paperwork necessary. You may also want a couple of impartial evaluators you trust to provide you input or watch a selected group of players toward the end of the process. Meet with all your supporting staff prior to the date of tryouts.
- (5) Be early and have the environment (cones/vests laid out, evaluators in place) prepared to start on time. Look professional!
- (6) You must understand that the players and their parents are evaluating you and the club and the administrative process is very important to their experience. Don't expect them to accept your offer just because you made it.
- (7) Have FUN and remember it just a GAME!!