

Characteristics of U8
Soccer Players
Second & Third Grade



Psychomotor Development
Cognitive Development
Psychosocial Development

Notable Quotes

- Bruno Bettelheim, Austrian Professor of Ed. Psychology (1903-1990). Supported and promoted the concept that play is important since it allows youngsters the opportunity to be “in control”. This contributes to developing a sense of security and self sufficiency.
- Erik Erikson, American specialist in Human Development, (1902-1994). Thought play to be the vehicle which allowed children to attempt to deal with and overcome problems. He also considered play as means by which children learn to organize life and integrate various experiences.

Notable Quotes

- Michael Ellis, American Educational Psychologist. Viewed play as arousal seeking. This is caused by a need to initiate interaction with the environment which elevates arousal and level of interest. He also associated play with “competence effectance - to produce effects and outcome”. Such changes demonstrate competence and result in feelings of “effectance”.

Psychomotor Development

- Skeletal system is still growing: growth plates are near the joints, thus injuries to those areas merit special consideration.
- Cardiovascular system is less efficient than an adults; a child's heart rate peaks sooner and takes longer to recover.
- Temperature regulation system is less efficient than adults; children elevate their core temperature more quickly and take longer to cool down than an adult.
- Improvement in pace and coordination from U6, however the immaturity of a U8's physical abilities are obvious.

Cognitive Development

- Concrete operational stage (Piaget)
- Limited ability to tend to more than one task at a time; the simple task of controlling the ball demands most of the attention capacity, thereby leaving little or no capacity for “tactical” decision making.
- Concept of time and space relationships is just beginning to develop and will be limited by the capacity to attend to multiple tasks.

Cognitive Development, con't

- Limited experience with personal evaluation; effort is synonymous with performance, “if they try hard, they performed well” regardless of the actual performance.
- Knowledge is compartmentalized; some relationships that ‘do’ exist are not recognized and some relationships the ‘do not’ exist are assumed.

Psychosocial Development

- Self-concept and body image are beginning to develop, but very fragile.
- Great need for approval from adults such as parents, teachers, and coaches; like to show individual skills.
- Easily bruised psychologically by adults; negative comments carry great weight.
- Like to play soccer because it is “fun”; intrinsically motivated.

Psychosocial Development, con't

- Their universe is expanded to the neighborhood.
- True playmates emerge with the inclination toward small group activities.
- Team identity is limited; “I play on Coach Tom’s team” or I play on the Tigers”. Club and league concepts are nonexistent.
- There is a desire for social acceptance; they want everyone to like them.
- The influential person is most likely their father or significant parent.

General Characteristics of Children U8

- Attention span a bit longer than U6, but still not at the “team at all costs” intensity.
- Inclined more toward group activities.
- Still in motion - twitching, jerking, scratching and blinking are all second nature physical movements.
- Still very sensitive (dislike personal failure in front of peers) - ridicule from the coach in front of the group is very destructive.
- Santa Claus is no longer a peer topic of discussion.

General Characteristics of Children U8

- Boys and girls still quite similar in physical and psychological development.
- Beginning to develop some physical confidence (most can ride a two-wheeler).
- Still into running, jumping, climbing and rolling.
- More into imitation of the big guys (sports heroes becoming important). Unfortunately few are soccer players.
- **STILL LACK SENSE OF PACE - GO FLAT OUT . Will chase the ball until they drop.**

Typical U8 Training Session

- Should not exceed 1 hour.
- Warm-up, each player with a ball, stretching and soccerastics, (15 min.)
- Introduce partner activities.
- A mixture of individual and partner activities. Add more maze-type games, introduce target games. (25 min.)
- Conclude with small-sided game 4v4, 5v5 to two goals, no GK's. (20 min.)

U8 Tactical Sign

Change of Direction

