U5/U6 General Characteristics:

Mental/Psychological (Cognitive)

* Physical and psychological development of boys and girls are quite similar
* Individually oriented (me, my, mine), egocentric
* Only understand simple rules
* Can process small bits of information
* Short attention span – tends to one task at a time
* Limited understanding of time and space
* Sensitive – easily bruised psychologically – need generous praise
* Love to use their imagination, pretend

Physical (Psychomotor)

* Constantly in motion – love to run, jump, roll and climb
* No sense of pace – go flat out, 100%
* Easily fatigued with rapid recovery
* Body lacks older person’s ability to regulate in different temperatures so may not be aware of body needing water, shade, or rest
* Eye-hand and/or eye-foot coordination is primitive at best – not ready for bouncing or flighted balls
* Physical coordination is immature – can balance on dominate foot
* Controlling the ball is a complex task
* Prefer large soft balls and foam balls
* Catching skills not yet developed
* Love to run, jump, fall, and roll
* Typically 36-40 inches tall
* Typically weigh 30-50 pounds

Social (Psychosocial)

* Love to show off
* Little or no real concern for team activities
* Influential person in their life is primary caregiver, often Mom
* Like to mimic goofy actions

Components of the Game for U5/U6 Players (in priority order):

**Physical**: Introduce the idea of how to warm-up and movement education. Begin education about nutrition with players and parents. Balance, walking, running, how to start and stop, jumping, hopping, rolling, skipping, changing direction, bending, twisting, and reaching.

**Technical**: Dribbling (stop and start), kicking, and catching. Experiment with the qualities of a rolling ball.

**Psychological**: Sharing, fair play, parental involvement, “how to play,” and emotional management.

**Tactical**: Where is the field? The concept of boundary lines, at which goal to shoot, and playing with the ball wherever it may go (rolling away, rolling toward).

Coaching Tips:

1. Coach is a facilitator, friendly, helpful, organizer, motivator
2. Coach should be patient, enthusiastic, and imaginative
3. General rule of thumb is one ball per player
4. Give brief directions, repeat as needed
5. Use visual demonstrations
6. Many activities of short duration
7. Lots of water breaks
8. Emphasize familiarity and confidence with the ball
9. Activities must be imaginative
10. Activities should include all players
11. Light coaching on simple techniques