U7/U8 General Characteristics:

Mental/Psychological (Cognitive)

* Short attention span, though longer than U6
* Love to use their imagination, pretend
* Limited ability to attend to more than one task at a time (controlling the ball demands most of the attention capacity, so little or no capacity for tactical decision making)
* Beginning to solve simple soccer problems (e.g., pass to a teammate)
* Some understanding of time and space relations
* Language vastly expands
* Ability to recall prior events is enhanced

Physical (Psychomotor)

* Beginning to develop physical coordination
* Improvement in pace regulation
* Skeletal system is growing; growth plates near joints
* Cardiovascular system is less efficient than an adult’s; heart rate peaks sooner and takes longer to recover
* Temperature regulation is less efficient than an adult’s; children elevate their core temperature more quickly and take longer to cool down than an adult
* Catching skills are still not developed
* Improvement in dribbling and kicking skills
* Love to run, jump, fall, and roll

Social (Psychosocial)

* Self-concept and body image are beginning to develop but fragile
* Sensitive, dislike personal failure in front of peers
* Great need for approval from adults; like to show individual skills
* Negative comments from peers and adults carry great weight
* Limited experience with personal evaluation; effort is synonymous with successful performance
* Inclined more toward cooperative activities (small groups)
* Included to establish and cooperate with friends
* Desire social acceptance; want everyone to like them
* Influential person in their life is a significant parent
* Like to play soccer because it is fun; intrinsically motivated; play for enjoyment
* Limited team identity

Components of the Game for U7/U8 Players (in priority order):

**Technical**: Dribbling (outside of foot), catching; introductions to change of speed and direction, receiving ground balls and bouncing balls, juggling, passing, shooting, tackling

**Psychological**: Working in pairs, sportsmanship, dealing with parental involvement, “How to play” (social cooperation), emotional management

**Physical**: Introduce idea of warm-up, agility, leaping, tumbling, eye/foot and eye/hand coordination

**Tactical**: Being exposed to all positions, 1v1 attacking, 1v1 defending, 2v1 attacking, names of positions, shape of players on field(triangles, diamonds)

Coaching Tips:

1. Coach is a sensitive and patient teacher
2. Coach has an enthusiastic and imaginative approach
3. Coach has ability to understand and demonstrate technique
4. General rule of thumb is two players, one ball (except for dribbling)
5. Sessions should be fun and imaginative game-like activities
6. Sessions should be thematic (dribbling, passing, receiving, shooting)
7. Light coaching on simple technique
8. Include small-sided directional games (1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, 3v3)