



JUVENILE COACHING GUIDELINES



Naomh Olaf GAA Club has a large number of juvenile teams in football, hurling, ladies football and Camogie. One of the most important section of our club is the juvenile section and it is vital that we as coaches ensure there is an accepted coaching policy in all codes. While the juvenile level is laying the foundations for Naomh Olaf to become more successful at adult level, the club is committed to enabling all players to reach their full potential both on and off the field of play. The club recognises that its future strength depends on recruiting, developing and retaining as many under age players as possible, regardless of playing ability. The most important persons in achieving these goals are the Coaches and Mentors, as they are the face of the club to the players, parents and other clubs. A dedicated, committed, knowledgeable and friendly Coach can portray the club and the GAA in a positive light. The club is committed to ensuring that Coaches also reach their full potential and as such these coaching guidelines are provided to help coaches develop and make progress with their teams and it is imperative that these guidelines are adhered to.

All Coaches must read and fully understand the clubs Juvenile policy.

Coaches and Mentors will be selected and appointed annually by a sub-committee of the Juvenile section. This committee will be comprised of the Juvenile Chairman, the Club Coach, and representatives from CCC1, CCC2 & Ladies/Camogie.

1. Qualifications

All mentors, who are appointed annually as above, must be fully paid up members of the club, Garda vetted, must be qualified at foundation level and be committed to implementing the “Code of Best Practice for Youth Sport” guidelines to their teams. Particular attention is given to instilling the highest levels of discipline and fair play in players, mentors and parents/supporters alike and as such the club has issued Codes of Conduct to Mentors and Players.

These Codes are compulsory and must be read and signed by all Mentors and Players. Any breaches of the Codes of Conduct will be referred to the clubs Disciplinary Committee. Abuse of players, mentors or officials will not be tolerated and will be promptly dealt with by the club disciplinary committee. Mentors must also implement the “Pathway for players” document into their sessions and abide by the club’s mission statement.

The club is committed to giving all mentors the tools to develop their skills and as such asks that all Coaches and Mentors attend the workshops and coaching courses provided by the G.P.O and then to implement any new coaching methods to their training. Ideally a high percentage of Mentors will then progress to Level 1. All juvenile teams must have a representative at juvenile meetings.

2. One Ball / sliotar per two children.

It is obvious that if children are to improve their football/hurling game, they need as much practice with the ball as possible. The more ball/sliotar contacts our players get in training, the more improvement there will be in their handling and overall skills.

It is recommended that for each player to improve their skill level, they need a minimum of 200 ball/sliotar contacts per session. To achieve this figure, you need a minimum of one ball per two children.



3. Structure of a session

While children love playing games, they will not continue to improve if they come to training and the ball is just thrown in for a match.

It is beneficial to allow the children a few minutes of each session for creative practice, where they are encouraged to practice a particular skill in whatever way they choose.

Modified games, such as 2v2 or 3v3 etc., scoring or possession games, are a great way of improving a player's performance.

The basic structures of a session which must be followed are:

- Warm-up
- Skill session
- Modified/conditioned games
- Full match

4. Fun games at start of session

The importance of children having fun at training cannot be overstated. Children get bored very quickly if not having fun and they will be far more likely to come back to training if they are having fun.

All training sessions should be fun and one of the easiest ways to have fun is with the warmup game. Fun games are a perfect way to start a training session and should involve as much movement jumping/changing direction and pace etc. as possible.

Fun games like tag-ball, call the number, bulldog, tag, catch the tails, stuck in the mud etc. are also beneficial for the following reasons:

- They are all about fun so the children love them
- The movements involved in these games mimic exactly the movements involved in match situations.

5. Emphasis on Skills

The vast majority of top senior inter-county teams use the ball for at least 80% of all their sessions throughout the year. This percentage should be **even higher** for juvenile teams, where the physical aspect of the game is far less relevant especially for teams in the U8 to U12 category, however as teams move up through the age groups there is more requirement for physical development.

Juvenile players are neither physically or psychologically matured yet and 'running' them without a ball/sliotar is far from enjoyable. As we saw in point 2, children need 200 ball contacts per session and taking into account children can work as hard in a drill using the ball, there is no need for purely fitness training.



6. Working with beginners

Naomh Olaf GAA Club is always actively looking to increase the number of juvenile members involved with the club. Children of all ages are encouraged to come along and are tempted with the prospects of making new friends, being part of a club and learning the skills of a new game. Obviously a lot of these children won't already have the basic skills and it is our responsibility as coaches to encourage these children and work extra hard to help them to develop these skills.

Even though this takes extra time and effort from coaches, is it fair of us to say "he/she is no good..." etc. and to just by-pass them?

N.B. Players can be made available to play for teams one age above e.g. U12 to U13, however this should not happen at the expense of a player already part of that particular team. Mentors must play players from their team before using underage players. Players will only be permitted to play one year above their existing year. Any exceptions to any of the above must be approved by the juvenile chairman. Any movement of players between age groups must be approved by the player's parents.

7. Skills Testing

If players are training and playing games in the club two or three times every week there should be an improvement in their level of skill and performance.

Players will have to be competent in the basic skills appropriate to their own age group.

Mentors will regularly skills test their teams and keep a record of each players progress.

Players may also be tested on these skills at any time by the G.P.O.

These skills tests should also be a method of encouraging our players to pick up a ball/sliotar and to practice at home.

8. Winning is not everything (or the only thing!)

In Naomh Olaf's GAA Club juvenile section, player participation, enjoyment, development and retention are the most important things. All mentors must be committed to long term player development and must not adopt a short term win at all cost attitude.

It is club policy that players' first responsibility is to play in teams of their own age group.

Where older teams are occasionally short, players may sub up, but not to the detriment of players in the older age group. Care should be taken that players who 'sub up' should not displace the players of the older team to the substitutes' bench.

9. New Mentors

All selection of new mentors must be agreed by the juvenile chairman, vice chairman, GPO and secretary.