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even if you've never coached or played football*

# Coaching Junior Football Teams FOR DUMMIES®



**National Alliance For Youth Sports**  
with Greg Bach

**James Heller**  
UK football coach

**A Reference for the Rest of Us!™**



**UK Edition**



***Coaching Junior  
Football Teams***

FOR

**DUMMIES®**





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**by the National Alliance For Youth Sports with  
Greg Bach and James Heller**



John Wiley & Sons, Ltd

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# *About the Authors*

The **National Alliance For Youth Sports** has been America's leading advocate for positive and safe sports for children for the past 25 years. It serves volunteer coaches, parents with children involved in organized sports, game officials, youth sports administrators, league directors, and the youngsters who participate in organised sport. The Alliance's programmes are used in more than 3,000 communities across the USA by parks and recreation departments, Boys & Girls Clubs, Police Athletic Leagues, YMCAs/YWCAs, and various independent youth service groups, as well as on military installations worldwide. For more information on the Alliance's programmes visit [www.nays.org](http://www.nays.org).

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**James Heller** has been involved in football on and off for over 35 years. As a player, he played from youth-team level through into senior football. He has also helped to coach and manage football teams at several different age levels. In his time associated with 'the beautiful game' he has seen junior football coaching in the UK improve from a situation where 20 children ran around a muddy park aimlessly chasing the ball, watched by two cold goalkeepers, to one where the focus is on mini-soccer, skills improvement, and 'one child, one ball' training sessions.



# *Dedication*

**National Alliance For Youth Sports:** This book is dedicated to all the volunteer football coaches who give up countless hours of their free time to work with children and ensure that they have positive, safe, and rewarding experiences. We applaud their efforts and commend them for making a difference in the lives of youngsters everywhere.

**Greg Bach:** This book is dedicated to my mom and dad, the best parents anyone could ever wish for. I am truly lucky and forever grateful for their never-ending love and support.

# *Authors' Acknowledgements*

**From the National Alliance For Youth Sports:** A successful youth football programme doesn't just happen. It takes a real commitment from not only dedicated volunteer coaches, but also parents who understand their roles and responsibilities and league directors and administrators who know what it takes to ensure that every child who steps on the football field in their community has a safe, fun, and rewarding experience. Football plays an important role in the lives of millions of children and provides them with the opportunity to learn the skills of the game and the chance to develop both emotionally and physically as individuals. The National Alliance For Youth Sports extends a heartfelt 'Thank you' to every person who makes a positive difference, through football, in the life of a child.

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# Introduction

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Welcome to *Coaching Junior Football Teams For Dummies*, a book dedicated to volunteer coaches everywhere who work with kids in the wonderful sport of football. We hope you find it informative, entertaining, and – most important of all – useful in helping ensure that every child in your team has a fun, safe, and rewarding experience. After all, that’s what it’s really all about.

## About This Book

We wrote this book for first-time volunteer football coaches looking for some guidance before they step onto the field, as well as for coaches who’ve been on the sidelines for a season or two and are interested in gaining more insight into specific areas of the game to benefit their young squads. If you’re new to the sport, you may be somewhat nervous or a bit apprehensive about what you’re getting yourself into. You can take comfort in knowing that this book will kick those concerns into touch and fully prepare you to enjoy a rewarding season with your team. Each chapter is filled with useful and straightforward information. The more chapters you knock off, the more knowledgeable you’re going to be about this great game and how to teach it.

We also have plenty of information for the veterans who’ve spent countless evenings at the local football pitches. We wrote plenty of chapters specifically for you, covering everything from drills you can employ to upgrade individual skills to examining in detail the various systems of play that are available and how to choose the one that best fits your team’s talent level.

One of the neat things about this book is that you can jump in anywhere. If you’re a rookie coach, you probably have several questions swirling around in your head on everything from how to plan an effective training session to what to say to the team after a loss. Just check out the table of contents or the index for the topic you want to read about and then flip right there to get the scoop. Each chapter is divided into sections, and each section contains information on a specific topic concerning coaching youth football teams.

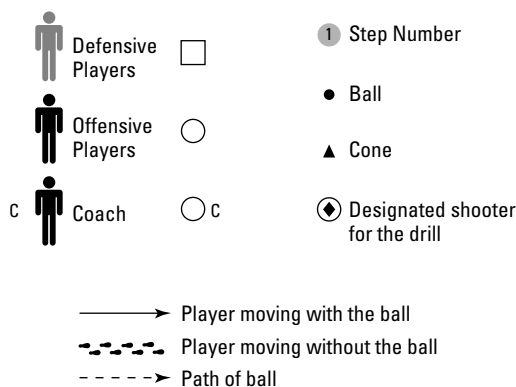
## Conventions Used in This Book

To help you navigate this book, we use the following conventions:

- ✓ *Italic* text is used for emphasis and to highlight new words and terms that we define in the text.
- ✓ **Boldfaced** text is used to indicate keywords in bulleted lists or the action parts of numbered steps.
- ✓ **Monofont** is used for Web addresses. If you find that a specific address in this book has been changed, try scaling it back by going to the main site – the part of the address that ends in `.com`, `.org`, or `.edu`.
- ✓ Sidebars are shaded grey boxes that contain text that's interesting to know but not necessarily critical to your understanding of the chapter or topic.

In football-speak, many people still use yards to measure distances, so we have used yards as our unit of measurement in this book.

We've also packed this book full of diagrams of training drills and plays that you can work on with your team. The following chart is the key to understanding all the squiggles and lines:



## What You're Not to Read

Personally, we would read every word of this book if we were you. That's how good we think it is. But we may be biased, and you may be short on time. So, for your convenience, we're telling you that you don't have to read everything. In fact, when you see text marked with the TechnicalStuff icon,

feel free to skip it. It isn't integral to your understanding of coaching or football. We also include grey-shaded boxes called *sidebars* that we fill with interesting (but totally skippable) information. Read at your own pace, and if you have time, let us know what you think of the book.

## ***Foolish Assumptions***

Here are some things that we assume about you:

- ✓ You know that football is played primarily with the feet and involves lots of running.
- ✓ You have a son or daughter who's interested in playing football this year, but you're unsure how to go about teaching him or her the game.
- ✓ You're a novice youth football coach, and you need to get your coaching skills up to speed.
- ✓ You don't have any aspirations of climbing the coaching ladder and overseeing a high school or college football team in the near future.
- ✓ You want the basics on things like what to do during the first practice of the season, how to determine who plays where, and whether teaching youngsters how to head a ball is safe.

If any of these descriptions hits the mark, you've come to the right place.

## ***How This Book Is Organised***

This book is divided into parts, each one pertaining to a specific aspect of coaching a youth football team. Here's a quick rundown.

### ***Part 1: Getting Started Coaching Football***

Coaching youth football can be a real challenge, but what you do before you and your team ever step on the field can make the difference between a smooth-running season and one that dissolves into total chaos and confusion. In this part, you get the inside track on how to develop a coaching philosophy that you're comfortable with and one that your players and their parents will embrace rather than reject. You also discover what all those markings on the pitch really mean and get an overview of the rules of the game.



## ***Part II: Building Your Coaching Skills***

Fresh air. Green grass. Colourful kits. This is where the real fun – and actual coaching – begins. Before you step on the field, though, this part provides valuable information on how to conduct a preseason parents' meeting, an often-overlooked aspect of coaching youth sport that's crucial for opening the communication lines, reducing the chances of misunderstandings and hurt feelings, and keeping your sanity. It also answers questions such as:

- ✓ How do I create training plans that aren't the same boring thing week after week?
- ✓ How do I work with the uncoordinated kids or the shy youngsters who won't stop staring at the ground?
- ✓ What about the kid who doesn't even want to be here?

Plus, we show you the game-day ropes – from pre-game routines to your post-game speech – and help you assess your team and your performance at midseason.

## ***Part III: Beginning and Intermediate Football***

Teaching kids the basics of the game – from passing and defending to dribbling and shooting – is crucial for their long-term enjoyment of the sport. This part shares how you can go about teaching by providing a variety of fun-filled training drills that are highly effective in communicating skills. Also, when your team has a pretty good handle on some of the basics, check out the chapter devoted to taking those skills up a notch.

## ***Part IV: Advanced Football Strategies***

When your players have a pretty good grasp of the basics of the game, they're eager to learn more advanced skills and continue their development. Part IV serves you well in this aspect. You discover more in-depth attacking and defensive techniques – such as overlaps and counterattacking – while being presented with an assortment of drills that you can use to help your players maximize their development. From indirect free kicks to defending a 2-on-1, this part examines it all.

## *Part V: The Finer Details*

Part V is a smorgasbord of information on several topics that we hope you won't be dealing with much this season, such as recognising injuries, confronting problem parents, and dealing with discipline problems on your team. You also find valuable information on pre- and post-game nutrition that you can share with your team to help maximise performance. And for those coaches looking to coach a team in a league, you find all the information you need to help make your transition to a more competitive level of football a smooth one.

## *Part VI: The Part of Tens*

It just wouldn't be a *For Dummies* book without the Part of Tens. Here, you find all sorts of precious information that you can put to use to boost the fun and enjoyment your team has playing for you this season. We include information on ways to make the season memorable and fun ways to end on a high note and keep 'em coming back next year.

## *Icons Used in This Book*



This icon signals valuable tips that can really enhance your coaching skills. If you're scanning a chapter, take a moment to read these tips when you come across them and then put them to work.



When you're coaching youth football, you have a lot to comprehend. This icon alerts you to key information that's worth revisiting.



Watch out! This icon alerts you to situations that can be dangerous or derail your instruction.



Football can be a pretty complex game, particularly at the more competitive levels, so at times throughout this book, we present some rather technical information. You may want to skip some of this information if your young squad isn't ready to get too in-depth in the game.

## *Where to Go from Here*

If this season is your first on the touchline as a volunteer youth football coach, you may be most comfortable digging in with Chapter 1 and moving forward from there. Please note, though, that the book is structured so that you can easily move around from chapter to chapter at your convenience. So if you need answers to some of your most pressing early-season questions, you can scan the table of contents or index for those topics and jump right to those chapters.

# Part I

# Getting Started Coaching Football



'He's very proud of his son.'

### *In this part . . .*

**B**efore you take the field with your young troops for the first time, do yourself, and your team, a big favour by diving into some behind the scenes homework to lay the foundations of a smooth-running season. The homework includes outlining your coaching philosophy, understanding how your league operates, and learning the basic rules of the sport. You find all the information to get your season headed in the right direction in this part.