

## LSC Coaching Notes Vol. 3, No. 2 - Dave Gosselin, LSC Coaching Director.

### Physiological and Psychological Differences Between Coaching Children and Adults

Recently, I have had several conversations with some of our newer coaches in the younger age groups. One of the interesting questions, posed to me was “should I have my players running sprints and doing fitness. My parents tell me I should make the kids run more” My reply is please do not have your players running sprints, especially before puberty. One of the real potential negative long term impacts is that your players will develop a hatred for running because it takes the fun out of the game. When kids stop having fun they will leave the game, but more importantly they may not be willing to engage in physical activities in the future because they had a bad experience. There are many ways to design activities that will help build up the younger players endurance so the running is done in the context of having a ball on their feet, playing and having fun. Be creative. Any regular tag game can be done with a ball at the player’s feet, The kids will do lots of running building their fitness level, yet still having fun. Another aspect of this issue is that the bodies of children are not yet ready for the physical demands that an adult body may be able to handle. Take a look at the physical differences outlined below. Keep them in mind as you consider your fitness activities for your players.

*The following information was part of a coaching clinic put on here in Lincoln several years ago by Mike Parsons, former Director of coaching of the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA).*

“Children are not mature adults.” A statement that is often heard, but not fully understood. Simply put, adults are fully developed physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and psychologically. Children are not!

The coach as a facilitator needs to be aware of the fundamental differences.

Physical Differences:

Children	Adults
Motor Development moves from head to toe and proximal to distal (e.g., develop control of arms before fingers)	Fully developed motor skills
Growing skeletal system	Mature skeletal system
Immature motor patterns - running, kicking, throwing, catching	Mature motor patterns
Inefficient cardiovascular system -high energy output for short periods -quick recovery -interval training recommended training method	Efficient cardiovascular system -can sustain high energy output -longer recovery period
Maximal aerobic capacity is related to lean body mass	Maximal aerobic capacity is related to lean body mass

Significant variations of size and strength within age groups -legs account for 65% of total increase in height from one year to the onset of puberty	
Increase in the number and size of fat cells until the age of 12	Fixed number of fat cells, only size will change.