U4-U6

FC Belton Player Development Framework

Director of Player Development – Coach Blizzard

U-4 to U-6 Player Development

1. **Create a Fun & Positive First Experience**
   - The primary objective at U6 is **fun and enjoyment**, helping children *love playing soccer* and want to stay engaged with the sport.
   - Activities and small-sided games are designed to be joyful and playful rather than performance-oriented.

2. **Maximize Ball Engagement & Touches**
   - U6 should focus on **touches on the ball** — giving players frequent opportunities to interact with the ball to build basic familiarity.
   - This often means skills like **dribbling and running with the ball** are emphasized over formal passing or tactical instruction.

3. **Introduce Fundamental Movement & Physical Confidence**
   - At this age, players are developing **basic motor skills** (balance, coordination, running, stopping, turning).
   - Soccer activities should support **control of the body**, which underpins later technical skills.

4. **Encourage Individual Exploration & Learning Through Play**
   - Young players should be encouraged to *experiment with the ball* at their own pace in game-like activities.
   - Structured drills are less important than creating environments where children **play and discover skills naturally**.

5. **Build Early Social & Emotional Skills**
   - U6 soccer supports **interaction with peers**, learning to *take turns*, *share space*, and *feel comfortable in a group setting*.
   - A player-centered environment focuses on positive social experiences, not competition.

U-4 to U-6 Player Development Goals

What These Goals Look Like in Practice

At the U6 level, implementation typically includes:

- **Small-sided games (e.g., 3v3/4v4)** to maximize touches and engagement.
- Coaches acting as facilitators — leading fun activities, not giving tactical instructions.
- No pressure on *winning*, *positions*, or match strategy; emphasis is on *playing and learning*.
- Recognition that this age group learns best through **game-like play rather than repetitive drills**.

Player Development Bench Marks

1. **Ball Familiarity (Most Important)**
   - By the end of U6, players should: Feel comfortable with a ball at their feet, be willing to touch the ball often, stop fearing mistakes or losing the ball
2. **Dribbling (Individual Play)**
   - U6 players should begin to: Dribble forward with **head mostly down,** change direction naturally, use **both feet** (not equally — just exposure)
3. **Stopping & Starting the Ball**
   - Players should be exposed to: Stopping the ball with the foot, running again after stopping, simple turns (pull-back, turn around)
4. **Kicking / Shooting**
   - At U6, shooting looks like: Kicking the ball **toward a goal,** using power, not technique, **celebrating any attempt**
5. **Basic Movement Skills (Hidden Soccer Skills)**
   - U6 soccer builds athletic ability: Running, stopping, starting, turning, balance, coordination
6. **Very Basic Game Awareness**
   - Players begin to understand: There is a **ball, t**here is a **goal,** we try to kick the ball into the goal
7. **Social & Emotional Skills (Often Overlooked)**
   - U6 players should gain: Comfort being in a group, willingness to take turns, confidence to try again after failure, association of soccer with **fun, if** they laugh, smile, and ask to come back — the mission is accomplished.

Skills U6 Players Are *NOT* Expected to Learn

This is important for parent and coach education: Passing patterns, tactical concepts, positions, team shape, "Looking up" while dribbling, winning mindset (Never emphasize a win, even when they do)

Example Player Evaluation Card

These are Never Shared with Parents or Players

Player Name:	Age (6yo only):	Age Group / Division:	Team Color:
Coach's Name:	Date:	FC Belton Player Evaluation	

	Task	Standards	What we Want	What we don't want	Grade
1	Ball Familiarity	Dribbling freely without instruction, Kicking the ball while running, Using different parts of the foot	Succes = *"I want the ball"*	Fear of touching the ball	
2	Dribbling	Dribble forward with **head mostly down**, Change direction naturally, Use both feet (not equally — just exposure)	Dribbling at U6 is about **movement**, not precision.	Close control Heads-up scanning Beating defenders on purpose	
3	Stopping & Starting the Ball	Stopping the ball with the foot, running again after stopping, simple turns (pull-back, turn around)	Basic, foot on top of the ball	Players lose interest after they run with the ball for a short distance	
4	Kicking / Shooting	Kicking the ball toward a goal, using power, not technique, celebrating any attempt	Any kick toward goal = success	Proper shooting form Plant foot mechanics Finishing technique	
5	Basic Movement Skills (Hidden Soccer Skills)	U6 soccer builds athletic ability: Running, stopping, starting, turning, balance, coordination	Everybody participates, regardless physical ability	Laps, cardiovascular training of any type	
6	Very Basic Game Awareness	Players begin to understand: There is a ball, there is a goal, we try to kick the ball into the goal	The player can take the ball to the proper end of the field and kick the ball into the goal	Positions Passing decisions Spacing Defense vs offense	
7	Social & Emotional Skills (Often Overlooked)	Comfort being in a group, willingness to take turns, confidence to try again after failure, association of soccer with fun, if they laugh, smile, and ask to come back — the mission is accomplished.	Laughter and Smiles	"I'm not good at soccer"	
				Average:	
	1 = Player demonstrates abilitites that are considerably above their peers	2 = Player is above average in relation to their peers	3 = Player is on-level with peers and is ready for nxt age group	4 = Player's abilities are still ceveloping, but they are still short of what is needed to play at the next level	5 = Player did not participate

Coach Blizzard: *"U6 players should learn to love the ball, love movement, and love the game — everything else comes later."*