

Sporting CT - Player Development Philosophy

Goals

- Create a coaching environment which encourages young players to develop and express their skill, technique and game understanding in age-appropriate sessions which coaches have the knowledge to help the players learn the game and who will encourage this style of learning.
- Achieve cultural and attitudinal change in all corners of MYS away from undue pressure to win at the expense of learning and progressing in the game.
- To provide an arena in which players can fall in love with soccer through age and stage appropriate training.
- In keeping with the wider issue of player development (as outlined by US Soccer) develop players who are confident on the ball, comfortable building the game 'through the thirds,' and with excellent decision making capability.
- Afford young players the opportunity to maximize their potential and encourage them to grow to love the game and become involved in future grass-roots initiatives promoting these philosophies for many years to come.

Winning and Development

Though the benchmark of development cannot be solely based upon win-loss records, it seems logical to assume that if sufficient numbers of talented players are produced, combined with quality technical and tactical instruction, then winning results will follow as a natural by product.

The player of tomorrow

Given the evolution in the demands of the modern game, it is likely that the following components will become central to the development of young players:

- The ability to release the ball accurately and instantly over a variety of distances using both feet and any surface.
 - Having the ability to spin, float and drive the ball whilst doing so will further increase the effectiveness of the player.
- An assured, varied and secure first touch.
- The capability to operate in congested areas with speed and precision, ensuring the protection of possession at all times.
- The craft to disguise intent with all their techniques.
- The ability to receive the ball and exchange passes with other whilst moving at optimum speed.
- The ability to eliminate an opponent either individually or in combination with others.
- Defenders, who can quickly change their feet and body position, whilst also retaining their balance.
- The capability to defend personally and collectively, against counter attacking or prolonged periods of possession.
- The ability to defend against quick inter-passing sequences and combined movements.

If players can combine these attributes, with basic defending skills and intelligence, they will always be in demand.

Teams of the future

Teams who can master and manipulate possession are likely to flourish in the future game. Successful teams will be capable of:

- Attacking quickly through central routes, as well as building goal scoring opportunities through passing sequences.
- Possess the ability to penetrate deep-lying defenses as well as vary the speed of their attacking play.
- Possess the ability to change quickly into a defensive mode when possession is lost.
- Players will need to be both comfortable and competent in a variety of defending modes;
 - Pressing early, defending deep and when faced with counter-attacks.
- Possess the ability to defend with discipline and structure for extended periods of time whilst opponents dominate possession.

All of these factors are likely to play a significant part of the future game, and it is with this in mind that the technical content of our curriculum is set.

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The key attributes required for the players of the future will now be listed.

These generic and position specific suggestions are based upon a plethora of recent studies undertaken by a variety of sport scientists and performance analysts in England and the ideas presented are those that the English F.A are using to remodel their approach to player development.

Outfield Players:

Technical

- Displays versatility and ingenuity to meet the demands of the game.
- Has assured basic techniques and an extensive range of ball skills
- Excellent passing, receiving and retaining possession skills
- Can create personal time and space at all times
- Can pass the ball intelligently and efficiently over varying distances
- Possesses clean ball contact skills when passing, receiving, retaining and travelling with the ball
- Can operate skillfully at optimum and varying speeds, even in congested areas
- Recognizes opportunities to run with the ball, and is effective in doing so
- Has the ability to turn with the ball in a variety of ways
- Can beat opponents in 1 v 1 situations, or by combining play with others
- Preferably two footed, with some degree of unorthodoxy
- Highly proficient in limited and instant touch techniques
- Can defend alone
- Has the creativity to produce the 'unexpected' in the right place at the right time

Physical

- Possesses agility, speed and strength as well as the appropriate levels of endurance and changes of pace necessary to meet the demands of the game

Tactical

- Intelligent for self and team
- Understands personal playing role through practice and experience
- Understands attacking and defending strategies
- Versatile and comfortable in other playing positions
- Anticipates rather than reacts to events within the game
- Constantly monitors the development of play whilst on the move, building mental pictures that assist in effective decision making prior to receiving the ball
- Assured and intelligent decision maker
- Effectively retains and protects the ball from opposing players and is competent in 1 v 1 situations
- Understands how to gain a personal tactical advantage

Psychological

- Eager to learn
- Controlled and adaptable
- Reliable, enthusiastic and self-disciplined
- Displays a winning mentality and does not concede defeat
- Understands the state of the game and operates accordingly
- Demonstrates good spatial awareness and is quick to respond to game events
- Deals with disappointments criticism and errors with resilience and a positive outlook
- Intense desire to succeed and to play with confident assurance

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Style of Play

The goal of Sporting CT is to provide a development model which gears our players to develop an understanding of the game, and promotes a guided philosophy towards how our teams approach game situations. Obviously there will be disparity from team to team however this should be variety upon a theme rather than dichotomic difference. It is one where the players are not only technically astute and comfortable when running with, controlling or passing the ball but where players have the understanding, audacity and cognitions required to solve problems, make the correct decisions and ultimately create chances at ease all with the patience, composure and ability to keep the ball away from their opponents for long periods of games. Evidently this will never become apparent in children who are advised to play long ball, kick and run soccer.

As such a number of guidelines for team/club philosophy are suggested below:

- Player Development always takes precedence over winning – we should never sacrifice long term goals for short term reward.
- Where possible the ball should be rolled out from the GK to the wingbacks/closest defenders and play should be built upon a series of passes as opposed to a long punt down field.
 - Consequently, play should occur through each third of the field (defense, midfield, attack).
- Players should try and receive the ball facing the way they will attempt to play (normally requires players to open up their body and play on the 'half turn').
- When receiving a ball in space and when appropriate (perhaps not within their own penalty area) players should be encouraged to dribble forward positively engaging the opposition.
- A teammate will never encroach upon the space of the player in possession of the ball. Instead players will look to provide the individual in possession of the ball with at least two options of a pass (can be in any direction).
- Players will adopt positions of support with 'line of sight' to the ball, ensuring that they can be found with a pass.
- Players should never be restricted to playing the game with a set number of touches but once comfortable with the ball they should be advised to try and play as 'quickly' as possible.
- Teams should look to play the ball wide and make the field as big as possible when attacking, the opposite is expected when defending.
- Wingbacks should be encouraged to push forward when appropriate and all teams will be expected to press the ball high up the field.
- Having the confidence to try new skills/escape moves during practice and games should be praised and not punished.

Player Positions

Prior to age 14, players should not be boxed into 'set' positions within the team. Instead they should be afforded the opportunity to experience and learn as many of the positions on the soccer field as possible. By around age 12 players will have started to develop an affinity to a generic position, be it defender, midfielder, goalkeeper etc. Varying the positions children play teaches an appreciation of the different roles and responsibilities associated with each unique placement, and also provides the opportunity to acquire the thought processes and identify what is important to the players playing directly against them.

Two methods to accomplish this are to either a. vary the position people play each time they are on the field meaning a number of different positions are played within each game or b. assign each player to a position for a set number of games or period of time in the season. Throughout the duration of the season players should be afforded the opportunity to experience each one of the zones and positions available on the field.

In addition to the premise that this exposure provides players with a greater tactical understanding of the game it is also important because many players at the collegiate, professional and international levels will now be playing in a role different to the one they played earlier in their careers and importantly, given the ever changing demands of today's modern game, players are now required more so than ever before to have the capacity to play in a variety of positions on the field. Without the experience of doing this as a youngster players would simply be lost.

***Please note much of this content is a condensed and modified version of the suggestions found in the English FA's Future Game document and a plethora of other educational resources published from the KNVB, NSCAA, SFA and Chelsea Football Club.**