

Player Development

Player development should be the foundation for any coaching philosophy. This manual gives the directives and sessions that can be followed in an attempt to develop our players. As you follow these directives and implement your training you should remember that we are trying to develop players who are:

1. comfortable with the ball (can possess on the dribble and beat players 1v1)
2. are mobile
3. can finish
4. who are technically, tactically and physically fast
5. defend and attack well
6. have flair and are creative
7. can strike the ball with both feet
8. can read the game, solve problems, make decisions (we should allow our young players to make decisions on their own without coaches or parents yelling “shoot it”, “boot it”, “pass it”, etc.)

This must be done incrementally. Use the directives, sessions and characteristics of each age to help guide you in your quest to develop players.

PHILOSOPHY

5-7 Years Old:

Our philosophy for this age is devoted to teaching the technique of dribbling and kicking. Confidence and control of the ball is essential for all other techniques and simple decision making to develop. one on one, two on two, and three on three play is encouraged. The teaching philosophy will include "fun."

8-10 Years Old:

Our philosophy for this age group is largely devoted to teaching youth players technique, keeping tactics simple and minimal. The building blocks of the game-shooting, passing, receiving, heading, dribbling, goalkeeping. Each player must master these skills in order to play the game properly. The teaching philosophy will include "fun." At this stage in the players development, its activities must be associated with fun; as well as a learning experience. We will organize the instruction with fun activities geared toward the techniques. Incorporated within this format is the playing of related games within smaller groups, which will ensure each players participation.

10-14 Years Old:

Our philosophy for this age group is devoted to refining the players technical abilities under game conditions (match related exercises, pressure from an opponent, limited time, limited space). in addition to this, basic tactics will be taught within the technique sessions. As techniques are the building blocks of soccer, individual and group tactics (1 v 1, 2 v 1, 2 v 2) are the foundations for team play. Simple principles of play, creating space, width-length, mobility, support are emphasized.

14 Years and Up:

Our philosophy for this age group is devoted to simulating game situations for individuals and teams to solve. Training will take place in a speed, pressure, functional format. individual, group and team tactics are emphasized, with such topics as mobility, support, width, improvisation, combination play and penetration, creating space, overlapping, balance, delay, control and restraint, pressure, concentration, restarts, systems and style of play are addressed.

COACHING U-8s Some Characteristics Of U-8 Children

Attention span a bit longer than U-6, but still not at the "team at all costs" intensity.

Inclined more toward group activities - key word here is inclined.

Still in motion - twitching, jerking, scratching and blinking are all second nature physical movements.

Still very sensitive (dislike personal failure in front of peers) ridicule from the coach in front of, the group is very destructive here.

Boys and girls still quite similar in physical and psychological development - no facial blemish concerns, yet.

Beginning to develop some physical confidence (most can ride a two wheeler at this point).

Still into running, jumping, climbing and rolling - natural instinct, when asked to however - "I can't do that."

More into imitation of the big guys (sports heroes becoming important) - unfortunately, they are not professional soccer players.

STILL LACK SENSE OF PACE - GO FLAT OUT- will chase the ball until they drop.

THE U-8 PLAYER AND THE COMPONENTS OF SOCCER

Technical

- It is left to the youngster which type of kick to apply. With practice the player develops their own style of kicking.
- This applies also to the stopping of the ball, heading, and dribbling.
- At this stage it is a matter of only basic moves resulting from play.

Tactical

This age group is already aware of possession of the ball and will compete for it.

This is the stage where the fundamentals of tactics are introduced during game play.

You will see, for example, that in front of one goal, attacking and defensive moves are called for alternately, depending on the loss or gain of the ball.

In the limited space of small sided play and with one goal as a target, the principle of attack is finding an open space.

When the game is concentrated in front of one goal and when there are several players involved, a funnel shaped defense is formed to avoid goals being scored.

Physical Condition

- In the running exercises, the aim is to build up quick reactions with speed over short distances.

The elasticity of the muscles, which is so important for the mastering of the techniques, is achieved primarily through games with a partner.

Please keep in mind, in both cases, attention should be given to the competitive aspect that is characteristic of this age group.

COACHING U-10s

Some Characteristics Of U-10 Children

Lengthened attention span.

Are team oriented.

Still in motion but not as busy-will hold still long enough for a short explanation.

Psychologically becoming more firm-confident.

Boys and girls beginning to develop separately.

Gross and small motor skills becoming much more refined.

Prefer team type balls and equipment.

PACE FACTOR BECOMING DEVELOPED - DO THINK AHEAD.

Some are even becoming serious about their play.

Enjoy the uniforms, team association.

Are now more inclined toward wanting to play rather than being told to play.

Coaching Rationale

One of the more important discoveries that occurs for an U-10 is that soccer is a team sport. He has played several years of parallel soccer, i.e., he runs along side of the ball most of the time or mullet net soccer where every field player chases the ball where ever it may be. In any casé, through natural physical and psychological maturation the player becomes more confident and decides that when he gives a pass to a teammate the chances are improving for his getting it back.

With the above as our basis from training this young developing player, lets look at some items we can use to improve him/her as a soccer player.

Training should be conducted twice a week for one hour and fifteen minutes.

Each player must bring their own ball to training-saves you carrying a car trunk full, a size #4 or #5 ball will do fine.

Though the activities during training can be longer than those for the youngest players, you should have at least 8-12 different things for them to do during training-an actively participating player is far less likely to bend your ear or beat on other players.

If you must coach your own child at this age, please be aware of the pressures his peers will bring to bear-if you are too easy on your own the rest complain-if you are too hard on your own-your own complain.

Diversity in playing ability at this point can span as much as 36-48 months-some have had an early physical spurt, some spurting now and some have yet to spurt.

Team play is becoming more important-interpretation, they are able to better gang-up on one another.

Asking them to spread out is beginning to make sense-they don't stay spread out, that comes a bit later.

Individual touches of the ball as many times as possible is still very important during the training session, now they can experiment with new ideas.

- Encourage them to train on their own by giving them homework type challenges, i.e., how many toe taps in twenty seconds, how many head juggles, hitting a mark. From certain distances, etc.

Positive reinforcement at this age gets fantastic results some of the results are not immediate but be sure to understand that before they close their eyes that night they might smile a bit.

COACHING U-12s
Some Characteristics Of U-12 Children

Enjoys competition

Psychological development has progressed

Teamwork has improved

Coordination has improved

Technical competency has improved

Development of speed, strength

Problem-solving can take place with teammates

Self-assurance and peer pressure are a concern

Note: Varying stages of puberty for boys and girl

Coaching Rationale

The U-12 player, though still in need of technical training and playing experience, can be exposed to tactics. The U-12 coach should be careful not to go overboard with tactical training. A coach cannot invade the cranial recesses of U-12's and pour in reams of tactical information. Before describing beneficial activities for the emerging player, a discussion of tactics is in order.

What are tactics? Tactics are decisions made by players. Soccer is as much a mental as physical exercise. Tactics are the thinking part of the game.

With the above as our basis for training this maturing player, let's look at some items we can use to improve him/her as a soccer player:

Training should be conducted twice a week for one hour and thirty minutes.

Each player must bring their own ball to training. A size #4 or #5 will be appropriate (check your age group playing rules).

If you must coach your own child at this age, please be aware of the pressures his peers will bring to bear - if you are too easy on your own, the rest complain - if you are too hard on your own, your own complain.

Each individual player is now required to consciously spread the game into "Penetration" and width.

This is the stage which reveals the type of emerging player, either the defensive or the attacking type.

At this stage particular attention is given to the development of team spirit. This is when the "proper game" emerges.

Encouragement still should be given for players to train on their own.

Positive reinforcement at this stage is still a must, with the introduction of tactics in training sessions, the coach must find the positives.

COACHING U-14s
Some Characteristics Of U-14 Children

Enjoys competition.

Psychological development has progressed.

Team work has improved.

Coordination has improved.

Technical competency has improved.

Development of speed/strength.

Problem solving can take place with teammates.

Self-appearance and peer pressure are a concern.

Varying stages of puberty for both boys and girls through age 10 (group co-ed teams) can exist without disadvantage, thereafter single gender teams are more suitable.

Sense of belonging, achievement and accomplishment.

Displays independence and is self-critical.

Aware of praise, status and recognition.

Coaching Rationale

The U-14 player, though still in need of continued technical training and playing experience, has now reached the stage where tactical training concentrates on individual and positioning exercises. They are easily accepted by the young player as they can be put into practice based on their own notions of their soccer idols.

With the above as our basis for training this maturing player, let's look at some items we can use for this individual as a soccer player:

Training should be conducted twice a week for 90 minutes.

Each player must bring their own ball to practice. A size #5 ball is appropriate.

If you must coach your own child at this age, please be aware of the pressures his peers will bring to bear - if you are too easy on your

own, the rest complain - if you are too hard on your own, your own complain.

The concepts of "possession", "penetration", "depth" and "width" is now required knowledge.

In this age group, the player discovers the need for a good base of physical conditioning.

The player must possess the abilities to tactically play in one position in addition to positional tactics.

The player becomes aware in this stage that soccer games are not only decided by game situations, but also by free kicks, corners and penalties.

Encouragement still should be given to their own.

Positive and corrective reinforcement should both be given at this stage, but as always the coach should look to find the positive.

DIRECTIVES FOR U-8

Dribbling, passing, receiving and shooting should be taught through the use of appropriate fun activities. The players should learn because we place them in the correct environment, allow them to play (discover), and give correct guidance.

DIRECTIVES FOR U-10

Dribbling, passing, receiving, shooting should be taught with an emphasis on individual skill/technique (it is OK to lose the ball on the dribble if they are trying to do it correctly or experimenting). Fun activities should still be used.

DIRECTIVES FOR U-12

Dribbling, passing, receiving, shooting should be taught with a continued emphasis on individual skill and ball control. We should encourage flair, deception and the ability to keep possession on the dribble. We should also emphasize team shape, support, problem solving, mobility and 1v1 defense. Heading may also be introduced.

DIRECTIVES FOR U-13

We should continue to emphasize individual development and technical mastery of the topics mentioned above. The players should also begin to develop the ability to find safe targets to pass to as soon as possible (this is in conjunction with dribbling). Different types of dribbling moves (shielding/escape, 1v1 penetration) should be emphasized. Teaching “shape” should continue. Defensive pressure and cover should be encouraged.

DIRECTIVES FOR U-14

Individual moves (shielding/escape, 1v1 penetration), 1v1, 2v2, 3v3 defending (closing down, containing, channeling, cover, balance), possessional exercises (shape, quick play, quick decisions, dribbling, passing two-touch), group directional play to goal (with 4v4 the shape should be a 3-1, with 5v5 the shape should be a 3-1-1), shape of the team and roles of the players, and playing to targets should be emphasized.

EXPLANATION OF THE SESSIONS

The following training sessions are age appropriate and are consistent with the directives that are given for each age group. You will notice that they move from simple to complex. They also encourage every player to take many touches on the ball. The four pillars of the game are also included (technical, tactical, physical and psychological). It should be noted that these pillars may mean different things depending on the age group (ex: a tactical concern for a 14 year old may be different than for a 7 year old and vice versa).

Any topics that are given in the directives that are not included in the following sessions may be added by you or by the trainers that work with your teams. Additional games and activities are also provided for you. If you wish to use the additional activities, you can create your own sessions as long as they are age appropriate and follow the correct methodology (use the sessions that I have provided as models).

The sessions for the youngest players use the following progression: warm-up, individual, small group, large group, cool-down. The sessions for the older groups (u-14) implement a warm-up, fundamental stage, match related stage, match condition stage and a cool-down. During the warm-up stretching should be included. Stretching may be interspersed throughout the warm-up or at the end of the warm-up. Various stretches are provided for you. The cool-down phase is meant to bring the heart rate down and to allow the lactic acid that has built up in the muscles to be released. For the cool down, you may repeat activities that are similar to the warm-up or do any jogging, skipping, and walking activities that will achieve the desired results. Stretching should also be included in the cool-down phase.

Sessions may be repeated as needed. You should determine which session you will do by observations from the game and what the directives are for the particular age group. You may or may not see lasting results from just one session, so the same topics may need to be repeated.

It should also be noted that “receiving” may be taught in many of the passing sessions. Also, “heading” (should be taught starting at approx. u-11 and even then, you may wish to use soft balls) games are included and may be used to create appropriate sessions.