

# **QTSA**

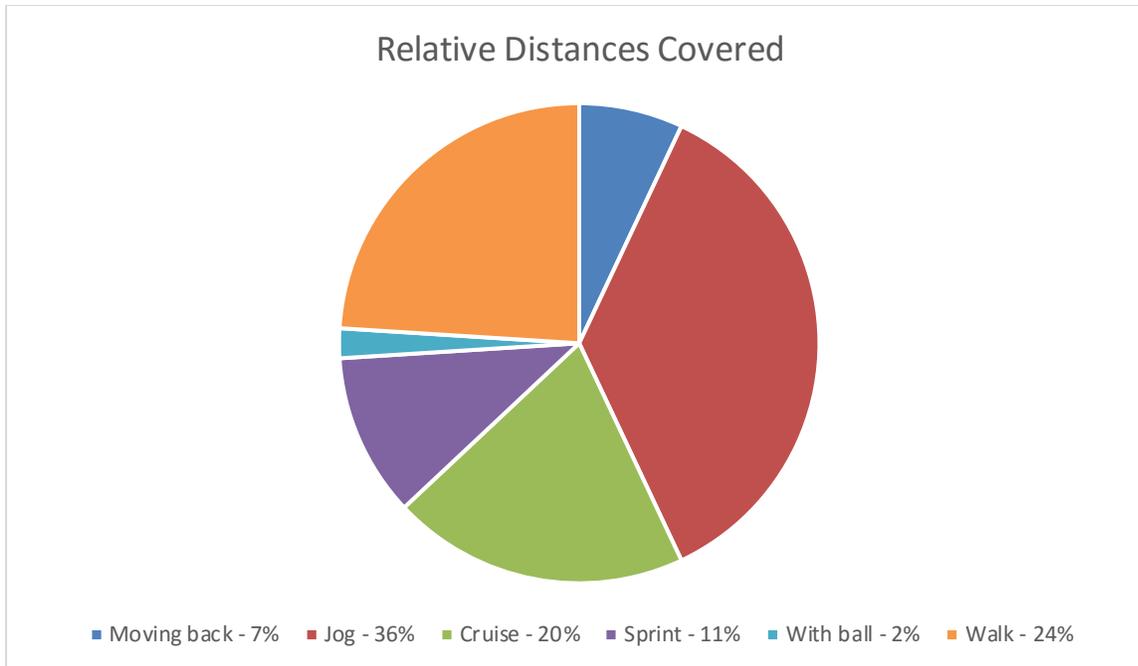
**Quality Touch Soccer Academy**



**Developmental Team information**  
[qualitytouchsocceracademy@gmail.com](mailto:qualitytouchsocceracademy@gmail.com)

Dear Parents and Players: Please read through our pre-season introduction letter that clearly explains what we want to do, what we expect from players and parents and how the upcoming season will go.

**What is Soccer?** Soccer can be considered an Intermittent sport (Jensen & Larsson, 1992, Di Salvo et al, 2007) with elite adult players covering up to 14KM per 90-minute match (Mohr et al, 2008). Figure 1 is a breakdown of relative activity elite adult players can go through in a match. Within this distance covered, can be between 1000 to 1500 changes of movement between every 5-6 seconds (Bloomfield et al 2007). Soccer is also a sport that requires players to sprint often, with players sprinting 10 to 15 meters every 90 seconds (Comfort, Bullock, & Pearson, 2012). While this type of action is a small part of the game, elite players can perform between 150 to 250 intense actions in a game each week (Mohr, Krstrup and Bangsobo, 2003).



**Figure 1. Describes the relative distances covered by outfield players based on categories of activity (Sturdwick & Reilly, 2001).**

For playing position examples, midfielders are most likely to cover their distances during a game within the low activity range. According to Barros et al (2007) midfielders could cover more distances during the 1<sup>st</sup> half of play over the second half of play. Midfielders will make up to 8.6 (4.3 SD) sprints per game, which is a much lower number when you consider a forward can make up to 15.9 (5.1 SD) per game (Andrzejewski et al, 2013). According to Bloomfield (2007) midfielders spend 14.6 % (9.2 SD) of a game running and 2.1% (1.6 SD) standing. In comparison to a forward which spends 11.1% (4.5 SD) of a game running and 5.3% (3.5 SD) standing, which suggests the midfield position calls for much more constant movement due to the demands of the position in today's game, which may be pertinent to the Barros (2007) study.

As is clearly seen from the above academic studies, Soccer is not an easy sport to play or learn. It's a constantly moving game, with different scenarios and situations changing by the second,

which requires a tremendous athletic and intelligence capacity to get close to a good level. It takes commitment to train, focus, determination to succeed and a comprehensive plan to lay the foundations for player development. It will not happen over-night and it will not happen if parents and players don't do their part. Let's remember we are at the very start of the developmental path and there will be many bumps in the road and there's a process that must be respected to achieve improvement. Nobody is above that law in Soccer!

### **QTSA Training Sessions:**

Our practices follow the FLASHPATHWAY™ Curriculum that QTSA designed and has used in the last six years in Stamford.

The lessons are very simple, child orientated and proven very successful in the long term development of young Soccer players. The lessons are designed to maximize the little time we have to practice (3 - 4.5 hours per week), give high technique, small sided tactic repetition and be fun and ever changing to keep the interest and intensity high. Please feel free to come watch the trainings and also ask any questions you may have on the subject.

The training content is very simple also and we focus on what players this young need to work on. Primarily we focus on the ball and getting as comfortable with a ball as possible, individually and collectively. We will practice individual ball skills, 1v1 play and play a lot of small sided training games to maximize the players Soccer time together.

**The hour and a half lessons flow as follows:**

**Ball Based Warm Up:** This is to practice individual ball skills, dribbling with a ball, 1v1 moves and time spent on understanding how the ball works. This is preparation for the body and mind to become as familiar as possible with a Soccer ball. A size appropriate Soccer ball is **highly** recommended for players of this age.

**1v1 play:** This tests the ball skills we have practiced in the warm up, will test player's ability to play 1v1 and give players a chance to find solutions to the 1v1 situations that arise in games. The FLASHPATHWAY™ Curriculum has many 1v1 scenarios for the players to play in, in both 1v1 ball each and 1v1 duel games.

**Passing & Receiving Technical:** We look to build the foundations of striking and controlling the ball in numerous technical activities that replicate a game situation. Passing and 1<sup>st</sup> touch is the window to really understanding the game and competence with these technical skills is of the utmost importance for players developing their individual game and developing the style of play we teach collectively.

**Possession:** To possess the ball you need both a high technical knowledge within each player and an understanding of how to support the ball carrier, with knowledge of movement, body position, angles, distance and timing.

Through the FLASHPATHWAY™ Curriculum we have a number of 3v1 situations that allow for technical skills to be practiced and give time to learn the supporting aspect of keeping the soccer ball within your team. 3v1 is our blue print to our possession game and takes time to

develop. Once players start to understand our 3v1 principals, this quickly transfers in to small sided games and competitive games. Once players and teams become of a level that allows for progression, we add numbers to the possession aspect of practices and get closer to real game numbers. Starting small and allowing the basics to be learned will allow for a better understanding long term.

### **Small Sided Games:**

The majority of trainings are based on Small Sided Games (SSGs). Small Sided Games can be regarded as Soccer games that are modified by reducing the size of the playing area, numbers of players playing as well as modifications to the rules (Gabbet, Jenkins & Abernethy, 2009). This allows for efficient training sessions that can quickly develop technical, tactical awareness as well as impacting physical performances (Haas et al, 2011). However, a coaches' role when picking why and how a (SSG) is set up is key, due to the modifications which should be relevant so they can lead the players on a path to improvement (Davids et al, 2013). The aim will be to share as much information as possible with the team, but in a way that's having the players perform the actions, think through their choices and execute all of this in a game like, yet highly repetitive environment.

Drills and activities that are not based on playing the game are very rarely practiced. For example, we don't do line drills or train players in ways that is out of context with game situations. The rare times this is done, is only when a player is struggling with a certain technical

aspect of their game and a discussion between the coach and player has taken place to help identify the issue so the player(s) can work on it in isolation with more focus. The learning environment should encourage game appreciation in addition to logical thought processes that are in line with the sports basic principles (Pill, 2012). The challenge for the coach is to try and re-create match play conditions, but, at the same time try to ensure the focus of the trainings are appropriate and relevant to the age of the participants (Owen, Twist & Ford, 2004). When you see lots of playing and small sided games on the training field, don't mistake this for QTSA just letting the players play. We set up SSGs that key in to our style of play, give many game like repetitions and its done in a way where the players are playing through their development stages.

In addition to our SSGs training, we also play tournament format and have our challenge games, where we will ask players and 3v3 teams to meet challenges set by coach. Players and teams are given rewards if the challenge is met. An example of this is: if a team can complete 3 passes and score, their team scores two goals. It's a challenge, not a condition, which allows players to choose and figure out what's best in the situation they're in. Players that are focusing in on the same personal goals and have the desire to show their peers they are improving can play a significant role in raising intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

### **Phases of play training (Game situation preparation)**

Phases of Play are game realistic practices designed to simulate a specific scenario or scenarios of play within a real game. This involves training blocks within a team and developing a whole team understanding of the principles of play and tactical understanding.

Usually this form of training takes place over 2/3rds of a full size, age appropriate pitch and focuses on a specific aspect of play. For example, teaching a team to play out from the back or teach a team's forwards to combine and create goal scoring opportunities. The team being "coached" should be overloaded (e.g. 11v10, 9v8, 8v7, 6v5) to generate success, confidence and conditions placed on the other team to further create a good learning environment.

Various start positions can also be employed to create the game scenario desired, such as throw ins, service to areas of the field or starting with certain positions within either team's formation. Phases of play also should involve some sort of goal or target for the opponent so the game becomes realistic on both sides of the ball.

Phase of play sessions will build on from a technical/functional activity or a small sided game that has been coached previously in training session to show the concepts we're looking to teach in a high repetition environment. Phase of play is then coached to paint the full picture of the concept you have been coaching in a game situation (QTSA, 2016).

### **Sunday Game days:**

#### **Style of Play**

The desired style of play is to "Play out from the back" with possession of the ball of high importance (US Soccer, 2012). This is done in two ways. First, the team is organized in a way where technical competence and positional understanding go hand in hand. Can the players be

comfortable either with the ball at their feet or receive a ball and understand what to do with the ball in advance of their final decision? As well as understanding how to move and position off the ball to create options for their team mates to use as a target or a decoy? Secondly, if the ball is with the other team, can the team disrupt and pressure in a way to regain possession as quickly as possible? Technical and positional understanding is again of the utmost importance to where and when the ball is pressed in order to regain possession. Linking this playing style philosophy to the FlashPathway training model through (SSGs) has been very successful if everyone is patient and supportive of the way we work with the players.

In order for our teams to play out from the back, there is an emphasis on no punting from our goal keepers or kicking the ball long with no aim from goal kicks. Punting and aimless kicking results in 50/50 chances of keeping possession, turns the game in to a physical encounter more than it needs to be and bypasses many players on the field meaning less touches of the ball, interactions with each other and generally less time to develop skills and a feel for the game. A good visual example of this is Figure 2 from another coaching organization based in Europe. It perfectly describes why we play out from the back and the benefit to the players learning and developing their game as players and as a team.

There will be times when our teams lose goals and or games due to this playing style, early in a team's development. It's understood we are asking the players to play in a more difficult way, with more risks and chances of mistakes. However, the upside in the long term far outweighs some losses at U8/9 for example, where the focus shouldn't be winning or coming 1<sup>st</sup> in a meaningless league table. We believe in being judged a little more on game results and

cups/leagues or tournaments once we have had time to develop our players and teams. Our recent record at U11 and up of winning State Cups, Travel and CT Premier Leagues, as well as in State and out of State Nationally ranked Tournaments, with players who have come through our system since u8, more than backs up our teaching/playing philosophy. To reach that we need patience, understanding and being realistic about your child's athletic and soccer capabilities early in their soccer developments. It's OK that in the early days of development that it looks messy, unorganized and to be frank, not like the Soccer you see on TV. In time it comes.

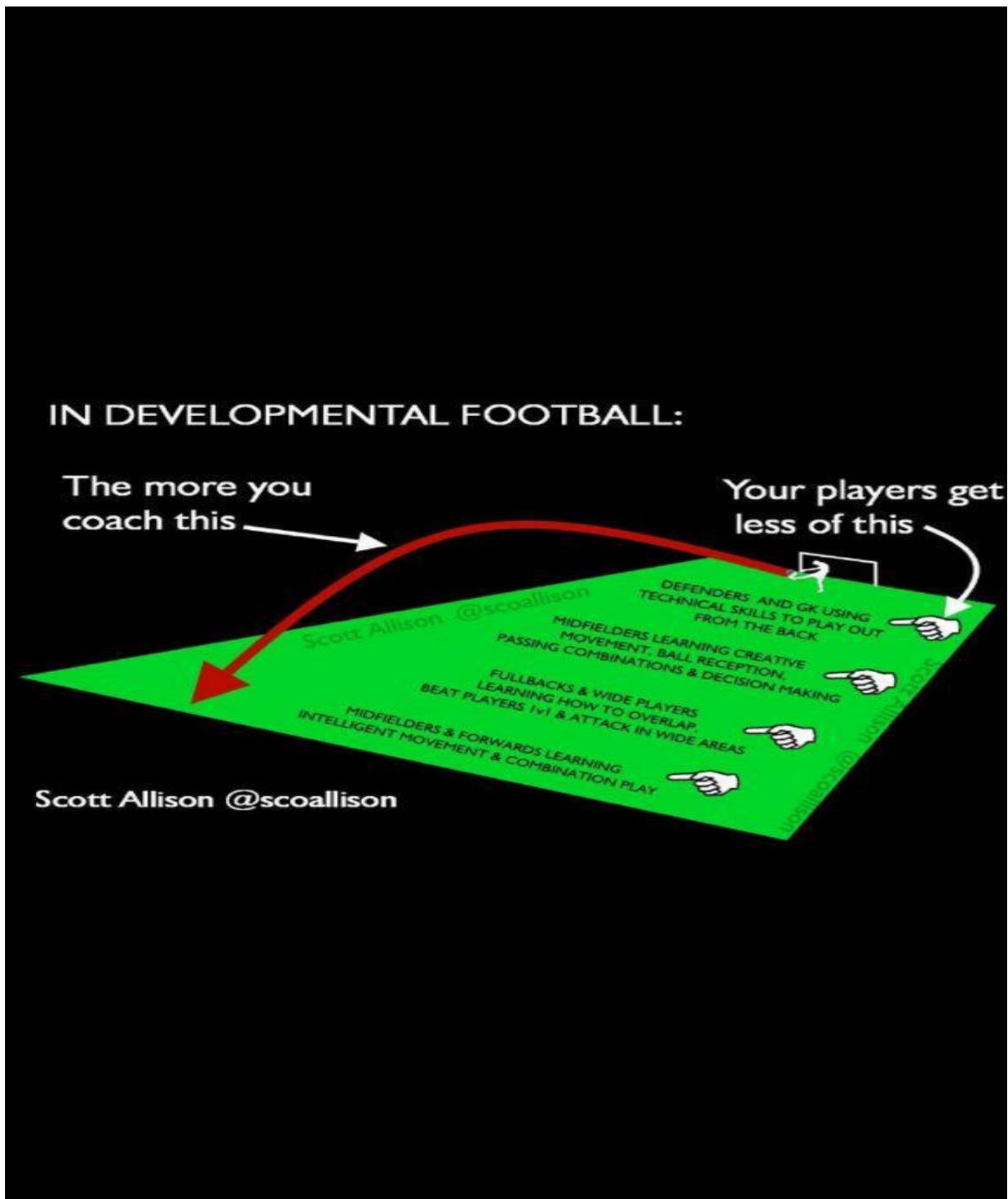


Figure 2. Why we don't punt or kick the ball long (@scoallison, 2016).

## Parents:

A few things for all parents to understand going forward so our coaching job is easier and the players don't get negatively impacted. Please **do not coach, instruct or try to influence player decisions in games**. The Sunday game is still part of the learning curve, a great chance for players to practice what they are doing in training and more importantly is a fun and great way to get outside and enjoy the game. 30 different voices all shouting different instructions can't be enjoyable for youth players. We know when we played as kids that hearing support was great, but never enjoyed when someone on the sideline was telling us what to do or losing their composure due to the team maybe losing.

From a player's perspective it's irritating and distracting. From the coaches' perspective it's irritating, can be damaging and undo previous work we've done. So please make supportive noises, but leave the playing to the players and the coaching to QTSA coaches.

QTSA coaches are very quiet on the sideline during the flow of play. We will watch the game and form views on what's going on and address anything we see in training or in the down time parts of games (pre game, half time, talks with subs, post-game). We will make some comments, maybe some adjustments, but will want to let the players play and play with freedom.

### **The weekly/seasonal break down of instruction:**

- Two or Three training days (depending on what level of team it is) where coaches instruct and facilitate in the learning environment.
- Pre-game warm ups and pre-game team talk giving collective and individual challenges and advice.
- Talking to players who are resting on the bench or have just come out of the game to address something we have seen to help them.
- Half time of games to reinforce our message and address positives/negatives from the 1<sup>st</sup> half.
- Post-game de-brief to recap and walk players through the game.
- Post-game emails to close out that week's training and game experience.
- End of Season player evaluations.

As you can see there are many, many coaching moments QTSA takes advantage of over a season. When the competitive game is being played we will instruct minimally, help players when we can but we will not be shouting, telling players what to do every second or making their choices for them. That isn't coaching, that's micro-managing. Please understand the difference before you consider accusing any QTSA coach of not coaching in a game.

### **Why do we coach this way?**

Being aware of the impact a coach can have on players and their team extremely important (Cushion, 2010) and something QTSA takes very seriously. With that said, there also has to be an understanding that a major role of a coach is to help athletes acquire skills that are important to competition performance (Jones, 2007). To do this will take a number of considerations such as a teaching philosophy, soccer style philosophy, practice methodology, teaching skills, along with the coach understanding how to balance out the amount of instruction and autonomy the athletes receive in their developmental process (Cross & Lyle, 1999).

However, research has highlighted issues with high levels of instruction and feedback in a training session or competition (Williams & Hodges, 2005). There can be an overload of information for the athletes which can impact the problem solving process, which can lead to the information being forgotten (Jackson & Beilock, 2008). There could be a more balanced approach from the coach where they could back off with too much feedback/instruction (Davids et al, 2008). The challenge for all coaches is to give the least amount of feedback/information while engaging the learner to think and answer for themselves for the athletes to progress (Williams & Hodges, 2005).

**Game time:**

Game playing time is determined by attendances to trainings, attitude and behavior at trainings and a general good work ethic to self-improve and being a good team member. Game time is also based on parental behavior. If a parent cannot demonstrate they can stand on side line and support their child and their team in a calm and non-intrusive manner, your child will not play as much due to that. We see it as the parent ruining the experience for every other child through this selfish behavior and we will no longer tolerate it.

Also game day warm ups are very important, so being on time and switched on to play is also a consideration. QTSA will be as fair as possible, but won't play players as much as others if there are any sort of issue on the subjects above. The QTSA philosophy on playing time is very simple, those who deserve to play, play, those who don't do as asked will sit more than play.

Players should arrive at training/games with QTSA white T shirts, black shorts and socks. QTSA will be offering our new T-shirts for \$10 each which can be used for training and pre-game warm ups. The T-shirts look great and if everyone has one, will give off that team effect in a more obvious way. Please contact us or see us at training to purchase the T-shirt.

Players need to bring a properly inflated size appropriate Soccer ball to all Soccer events, wear shin guards in addition to the players bringing a good supply of fluids, due to trainings being very high in intensity.

### **Communications:**

Any issues you feel you need to approach us with must be done in the correct manner. QTSA coaches will not discuss any issues right after a Sunday game. This tends to be the time when parents get confrontational after a loss or if your child didn't get the game time you wanted. We need you to be calm, go home and think about what you want to say. You should contact the team Manager 1<sup>st</sup>, the manager will contact your QTSA coach and we can then work together in calm way to resolve anything you may be unhappy with. QTSA coaches have been instructed to **NOT** get in to any discussions about any sort of issue on a game day. They will not talk to you at all about it, so please go through the right channels to get your points across!!

Thank you for your time, we are sorry for the length of this informational letter, but we think reading this now and getting things out in the open now will allow for us all to get used to what's going to happen and make this coming season as smooth as possible.

Please feel free to contact us, introduce yourself and fire any questions you have our way. If we can answer your questions we will, if we can't, we will try our best to get you the right and honest answer.

Yours in Soccer,

QTSA, Inc.

Jason Segovia - Program Director

Antony Wilshaw - Technical Director

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