



US Women's National Teams Program

U12 – U19 Club, State and Region Curriculum Guidelines

The success of the Women's National Teams Program is largely dependent on the quality of the programs that “feed” into it. True player development occurs when each player's daily training and playing environment is of the highest quality. If this environment is consistent, with a clear vision of what lies ahead for each player, development is then maximized.

Towards that end, the National Staff has put together a list of curriculum guidelines for the U12 through U19 age groups at the club, state, and regional team levels. The purpose of this document is to:

- Educate coaches as to the “standard of play” and “expectations” for each age.
- Provide coaches with a framework with which to organize curriculum decisions.
- Provide for consistency, and guidance throughout all levels of play.
- Improve “vertical integration” for player development.
- Improve the quality of play on a national basis.

It is important to note that each player and each team is different. The following document thus serves as a “*guideline*” or “*standard*” by which players and coaches can plan development. Individual and team needs can therefore be identified and addressed. Individual strengths can be stabilized while deficiencies can be improved. Of course, an accurate assessment of each player's and team's needs are essential. It is imperative that each coach take the time to observe and study the level for which their team is preparing to compete. For example, each club coach should be attuned to the state level, state coaches should make an effort to observe the regional team play, regional coaches should be familiar with the age-group specific national team level, and every coach should spend time studying the Full National Team. In this way, a more accurate assessment of player expectations is possible.

The ultimate goal of each coach should be to prepare the players to compete at the “next level.” We hope this document will assist you towards your goals of developing more sophisticated players and teams.

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“There are many people, particularly in sports who think that success and excellence are the same thing and they are not the same thing. Excellence is something that is lasting and dependable and largely within a person’s control. In contrast, success is perishable and is often outside our control.... If you strive for excellence, you will probably be successful eventually.... people who put excellence in first place have the patience to end up with success.... An additional burden for the victim of the success mentality is that he/she is threatened by success of others and resents real excellence. In contrast, the person fascinated by quality is excited when he/she sees it in others.”

Joe Paterno – Penn State University Head Football Coach

Under 12

Foundation Phase: (The Romance)

Development of Individual Skills Individual & Small Group Tactics

The effect of the role-model is very important at this stage of development. Hero worship, identification with successful teams / players and a hunger for imaginative skills typify the mentality of this age. This is a time of transition from self-centered to self-critical. Players of this age have a high arousal level in relation to the training of basic skills. This is the "golden age of learning" and the most important age for skill development. Demonstration is very important and the players learn best by "doing." This is also an important time to introduce and teach the basic principles of play. It is important to establish discipline from the beginning.

A. Coach:

Sensitive teacher; Enthusiastic; Possess soccer awareness; Ability to demonstrate or utilize someone who can paint a good picture (older player, assistant coach); Knowledge of the key factors of basic skills; Give encouragement.

Recommended License: USSF 'D' License or higher.

B. Technique:

Important to establish a good strong solid base.

Development of individual skills under the pressure of time, space, and an opponent.

Increase technical speed.

Dribbling: Encourage risk taking! Moves to beat an opponent; Keeping possession.

Shielding: Spin turns; Change of speed, Change of direction.

Receiving: Ground and Air balls. All surfaces, from a partner and on the move.

Shooting: Proper striking technique, partner serve from all angles, Turns, Cut backs; volleys.

Passing: Proper technique - Laces, Inside, Outside - Short and Long; Crossing.

Heading: Self serve; partner serve -jumping to head, turning the ball; Partner juggling.

Tackling: Proper technique, in balance, no fear.

C. Tactics:

"Dawn of tactical awareness"

Individual: 1v1 situations in attack and defense. Play 1v1 frequently.

Small Group: 2v1, 2v2, 3v1, 3v2, 3v3, 4v2, 4v3, 4v4.

Play a variety of positions; Develop an awareness / Complete player. Basic principles of play.

Attacking: Keep possession; Encourage risk taking; Take players on 1v1 in proper areas of the field. Support. Basic combination play (Wall pass, takeover). Promote attacking soccer.

Defending: Proper pressure (in front and behind); Channel player; Immediate chase.; Cover; Marking.

Team: Team tactics do not take priority at this age. Focus is placed on maintaining balance and playing skillful soccer. Players play a variety of positions and emphasis is placed on player development instead of getting results as a team.

Recommended System: put players out of the field for the love of the game, without spending much time coaching a system. Focus on teaching principles of play as opposed to systems. If playing 8 v 8, then play a 2-3-2. If playing 9 v 9, then play a 3-3-2. Most importantly, players should enjoy the great game!

A great deal of coaching/teaching within 4 v 4 games

D. Physical:

All fitness work done with the ball, in partners, and in fun engaging activities.

Flexibility

Agility – with and without the ball

Speed

Strength

Endurance

Balance

E. Psychological:

Keep it FUN and ENJOYABLE to foster a desire to play (Intrinsic motivation).

Encourage decision-making

Imagination / Creativity

Increase demands

Discipline

Encourage players/teams to watch professional and national team games on tv.

F. The Game: 8 v 8 or 9 v 9 (Includes keepers)