



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 16

Fervid Phase: (The Dedication)

Development of Individual Skills Individual, Group & Team Tactics

This is a critical time in the player's development. Many stop playing due to other interests, lack of success, shortage of playing opportunities, poor leadership, or other reasons. Players tend to lack mental toughness and self-confidence. They tend to be self-critical and struggle with their desire to be competitive or need to be more competitive. There is a need for attention and security. A great focus on team spirit, leadership and discipline within the team.

A. Coach:

Charismatic; Experienced; Knowledgeable; Articulate; Disciplinarian; Managerial know how; Thoughtful persuader.

Recommended License: 'B' License or higher.

B. Technique:

Skills should be mastered leading to artistry and improvisation: All under match conditions.

-Individual skill covered during the warm-up, and/or in competitive situations.

-Increase technical speed. *It is important that technique is still highly emphasized at this age.*

-Strike balls cleanly over distance with accuracy under pressure.

C. Tactics:

Increase tactical speed (decision making)

Individual: Decisions based on thirds of the field.

Attacking:

Application of varied technical abilities in order to increase tactical options.

Aggressive attacking mentality in final third. Emphasis placed on predicting what the game will need next. Knowing what each player's specific roles and responsibilities are lends to greater understanding of the big picture.

Defending:

Clear understanding of how the quality of pressure effects team defending success.

Being able to take options away from the attacker.

Small Group: 4v4, 7v7, 9v9

Attacking:

Balance of needing possession and penetration

Combination play: wall pass, take over, overlap, double pass, third man running

Penetration

Creativity in solving problems

Mobility – movement without the ball

Crossing – picking out a runner rather than putting it in the box

Box Organization – penetration, width and support for every ball played in the box

Attacking as a group of 3 (forwards, midfielders and defenders)

Set plays (80% success rate: where we get: 1)Goal 2) Shot on Goal, or 3) Corner Kick

Defending:

Compactness

Cover, Delay, Dictate and Recover

Communication (Who, what, when, where)

Defending as a group of 3 (forwards, midfielders and defenders)

Enjoy winning possession of the ball and dictating the play

Set plays

Team: Clearly defined team tactics... how the team decides to play as a group.

Attacking:

Comfort with direct and indirect styles

Sustained possession as a means to break down the opponent's defense

Understanding how to counter attack

Decisions based on thirds of the field.

Defending:

Comfort with "high pressure" and "delayed high pressure" styles

Understanding of zonal and man-to-man marking play

Goalkeeper as the last defender

Keeping good team compactness

Stopping the counter attack

Decisions based on thirds of the field and different systems of play

Recommended Systems: expose players to various systems using a 3-4-3 and a 4-3-3.

A great deal of coaching/teaching within 7 v 7 and 9 v 9 games

D. Physical:

Fitness work with and without the ball.

Flexibility - Static stretching after training / matches.

Dynamic Flexibility – partner stretching

Importance of discipline for warm-up and cool-down

Agility - with and without the ball

Footwork - keeping the feet active when moving / playing

Endurance - Aerobic and anaerobic

Strength - Upper and lower body. Core strength and stability

Balance

Nutrition - Proper diet - pre-game, post-game, tournaments, etc..

Prevention and care of injuries.

Importance of rest/recovery – schedule issues relative to the physical demands.

E. Psychological:

Increased concentration

Leadership / player responsibilities

Discipline

Respect for the game

Goal setting

Vary program- Satisfy player's urge for competition

Establish pre practice and pre game routine (as individuals and team).

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

F. The Game: 11 v 11