

U14 - Thirteen and Fourteen Year-Olds

Technical Guidelines:

- Passes - on the ground and in the air - are accurate over 20 to 30 yards, delivered with the correct weight and to the proper side of the receiver.
- Some "position specific" or functional technical training.
- Heading with a jump: accurate headers at the goal, effective defensive heading.
- Volleys and half volleys, shooting from crosses.
- Lots of shooting under pressure: always hitting the frame of the goal with hard shots, aggressive attitude about trying to hit the sides of the net.
- Fluid turns under pressure.
- Slide tackles.
- Beginning to swerve the ball.
- Receiving air balls as well as ground balls effectively.

Fitness Guidelines:

- Nothing without the ball.
- No strength or endurance work for its own sake.

The Practice Environment:

- A learning environment.
- Vigorous, pressured activities and intense, competitive games are the core of practice.
- Tactical problems to solve at every practice.
- Lots of 2 v 1 and 2 v 2 duels.
- 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 games at every practice.
- Practicing situations and restarts: corners, free kicks, penalty kicks, throw- ins.
- Lots of refined, incisive technical and tactical advice and suggestions from the coach.
- # 5 ball, regular goals.
- The week's practice is 90 minutes long.

Tactical Guidelines:

- Developing good verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Making good choices about when to pass, dribble, or shoot.
- Looking for the third attacker when in possession of the ball; solid grasp of playing in triangles.
- Exposure to various systems: 4-3-3, 4-4-2, 3-4-3, etc.
- Ways to create space for a teammate.
- Understanding offside.
- Appreciating variables: weather, size and condition of the field, etc.
- Awareness of the situation during a game: ahead, behind, tied, time left.
- Asking for the ball from the ball possessor at the right moment.
- Roles of the players on the field in the three "blocks": forwards, midfielders, and backs.
- Some "position specific" or functional tactical training.
- Takeovers and blind side runs (to go with wall passes and overlaps): ways for two attackers to outplay one defender.
- Secure tactical sense about shooting: generally to the far post as opposed to the near post, low rather than high, etc.
- A really aggressive, dynamic attitude about shooting.
- Using deception: looking one way, passing another, for example.

- Understanding defenders' priorities: intercept the ball, tackle at the moment your opponent receives the ball, etc.
- Defenders understanding how to "shepherd" attackers, how to push them wide.
- Roles of the first and second attackers and defenders in 2 v 2 situations: ideas for combination play, pressing, cover.
- Understanding defensive pressure, cover, and balance.
- Always thinking ahead!

Games:

- Beginning to specialize by position.
- Equal playing time.
- Stress on fair play, following the spirit of the game.
- Understanding the importance of good pre-game warm-up and post- game warndown.
- Ability to adjust during game.