

Fall 2014 PCSC Developmental Academy

In the fall of 2013 The Portsmouth City Soccer Club launched the pilot season of our Early Development Program (EDP) designed as an introduction to club soccer for 1st and 2nd graders that share similar motivation and ability. The goal of the EDP is to instill basic skills and principals of the game to our players, parents and coaches through fun activities and small sided competition. By creating an environment that teaches without the fear of trying or the monotony of “drills”, we strive to develop a love of the game within our players that will ultimately become a passion that will last a lifetime.

This past season, PCSC cautiously limited the EDP program to 28 players due to the logistics of adding more players, field space, equipment and coaches. The good news is that the EDP program saw fantastic results in 2013 and will be expanding in the fall of 2014 up to 60 players and will be called our U8 Developmental Academy (DA) moving forward. Same program just under a different name. Why?

PCSC is very pleased to announce that our fall 2014 U9 and U10 teams will become the next phase of our Developmental Academy program, adopting many of the same principles and methods as our EDP from last year. The DA is a comprehensive program for 1st through 4th graders that is the product of recommendations from US Soccer and what we wholeheartedly believe is the best course for the development of our young players.

Flexible Grouping

In the fall of 2014 each of our DA's age/gender groups (U9 Boys, U9 Girls, U10 Boys and U10 Girls) will train as one pool, what it otherwise called “Flexible Grouping”. As an example; all of our U9 boys will train together as one group whereas in the past our boys at this age would have been split into two or three teams and wouldn't have a chance to be together again till the next round of tryouts.

Flexible grouping is a change for PCSC as we shift our U9 and U10's away from strictly a team program. Recommended by US Soccer, Flexible Grouping works with a “pool” of all players at a specific age and gender that allow coaches to constantly change match rosters to be ever evolving and so that it allows a variety of game day experiences for the players and coaches. This is a break from traditional models that place children with the same group or team for a season and perhaps the year. The problem with team placement is that it emphasizes organized soccer too early in development and it puts the team ahead of the individual player at an age where each child's growth, relationships and development is far more important than that of building a team. Other issues with team placements include the creation of random talent pools, more chance and less control over lopsided games, minimal control over the environment, less variety, and in some cases one's team experience may leave a child feeling stuck in a poor relationship or connection with peers or coach.

The benefits of flexible grouping allows more variety and opportunity to control the environment from week to week in practices and game days-like creating teams of same age and/or ability to play with and against one another, having a small sided round robin event with multiple games, playing same gender, etc. Most importantly, having this freedom to mix and match children as they grow and develop throughout the season allows each player in the pool the same opportunities to succeed to the best of their ability and efforts.

U8 Coed Developmental Academy (DA)

The U8 Coed DA will train one weekday and one day on the weekend with a central focus on having the players touch the ball as many times as possible. Recall also that we are also developing body coordination so we will be combining different types of movement with the ball.

Sessions are 75 minutes. Parents are encouraged to drop off and welcome to return for the final 30-45 minutes of match play.

- The first 30-45 minutes is designated for dynamic, fun soccer games that teach positioning, tactics and each of the specific technical skills of the game.
- The second 30-45 minutes will be designated to 3v3 or 4v4 match play which may vary from session to session depending on the training focus of the day.

U9 Developmental Academy

Our U9 boys and girls teams will be changing from previous years to the DA model in 2014. This age group continues to focus on the same fundamental skills and small sided play as with our U8 DA only with a stress free introduction to 6v6 “friendly”/scrimmage match play on the weekend. Flexible grouping will allow our coaches to work with match rosters each week to allow the entire pool of players various opportunities to play with different coaches and different players against a variety of opponents.

Training

The U9 Boys and Girls DA pools will each train twice a week (M-F) for 1.5 hours, led by a professional coach hired by PCSC with parent coaches assisting and participating in the training. Again, all U9 boys train together twice per week as one group and all U9 girls do the same.

- The first 45-60 minutes is designated for dynamic, fun soccer games that teach positioning, tactics and each of the specific technical skills of the game.
- The second half of training will be designated to 3v3 up to 6v6 match or “match like” play which may vary from session to session depending on the training focus of the day.

Match Play

Weekend matches will be organized by our coaching directors with other PCSC teams as well as neighboring communities with programs that have adopted similar philosophies as ours. Our parent coaches will manage the flexible rosters during match play on the weekend building on the fundamentals learned during training.

U10 Developmental Academy

Our U10 boys and girls teams will also be changing to the DA model in 2014, however this age will compete in organized league play. While this age group continues to focus on the same fundamental skills as the U9's, the U10's are transitioning into more competitive 6v6 matches.

Training

The U10 Boys and Girls DA Pools will each train twice a week (M-F) for 1.5 hours, led by a professional coach hired by PCSC with parent coaches assisting and participating in the training.

- The first 45-60 minutes is designated for dynamic, fun soccer games that teach positioning, tactics and each of the specific technical skills of the game.
- The second half of training will be designated to 3v3 up to 6v6 match or “match like” play which may vary from session to session depending on the training focus of the day.

Match Play

As described in Flexible Grouping, players will not be assigned to a specific team. Instead the team rosters will change weekly allowing for different players to play together each week. Volunteer parent coaches will work with the professional coach during the weekday training sessions but will be the lead coach for weekend games. We will be entering teams at different division levels within the league to allow for a proper balance of competition but the rosters will not be set as had been done in the past. By Sept 1st we plan to be able to give each player their schedule for the entire season so that parents know when and where their child will need to be for the entire fall.

Tournament

Both the U10 Girls and Boys will participate in a Columbus Day Tournament. More info will be shared in September.

Coaches

PCSC is always looking for parents volunteers to coach throughout the year. While the DA programs will have a Professional Coach (PC) lead the training sessions during the week, the parent coaches are equally an active part of the training sessions and ultimately take the lead during weekend match play.

Training

The Professional Coach (PC) will develop each training session with a focus on one or two specific skills and/or concepts and will spend 5 minutes with the parent coaches prior to training to go over the finer details and objectives for the day. Then groups will be broken up into smaller training pods ranging from 12-16 players per group and parents will implement the session. There will be handouts each day so coaches will be able to refer to the basics mid-session and the PC is always available during the session to help even though they will be actively participating themselves. The games we play are very easy to understand and are almost all variations of other games children play outside of soccer.

An Example of a Warm Up Game.

Everybody's It Tag (5-10 minutes) - Basic U7-10

As simple as it sounds...a great way to get the group moving and laughing. Every player has a ball and they count how many players they can tag with their soccer ball below the knees with a push pass (Coach can demo a proper push pass). Hit anyone above the knee and you have to sit out for 30 seconds. Encourages control with the ball, body movement and field awareness. (This can be modified as a team game as well which brings in communication, organization and teamwork.)

The PC will set the parents in motion with the specific goals being very clear. At this age, we are mostly focused on making sure the players understand and conquer the fundamentals so all the concepts and skills are easy to explain and implement.

Match Day

Our PC and PCSC Directors will provide direction as to Match Day procedures but this day is solely coached by the parent volunteers and is their time to put the lessons into action. There will be more information on Match Day expectations for players, parents and parent coaches to come as we near the season.