



SSA Under 14 to Under 19 Practice Structure

Coaches working with these age groups should base their decision regarding the practice themes on their team's performance in matches. In other words, the games will tell the coaches what they need to work on. However, keep in mind that very few recreational players would be willing to engage in a technique enhancing activity that is not fun. The best approach is to use game-like activities that create repetition of the theme and are enjoyable. Competition is important to players and an opportunity to enhance skills should be provided. The focus should be on using player's ability to succeed in the activity. Challenge them with multiple tasks (variations), and encourage the understanding of positional responsibilities and how fits in with team (team shape). It is important to set realistic goals and remember that if players do not possess the requisite skills to begin taking on new challenges, the players must be given the opportunity to work on the tools that they lack.

Additional considerations...

Under 14:

- At these ages, ball skills, enjoyment and insight into the game, with a gradual introduction to fitness, mental toughness, and results are the keys
- Success in winning matches should begin to be the product of a consistent and systematic approach to the game that focuses more on player development than on team building
- These players are a long way from being "complete"
- Encourage players to play in different positions. Don't pigeonhole players based only on what is best for getting the result
- Their focus should be on how their decisions and their ball skill help or hinder their team's ability to win at whatever game or exercise that they play
- Focus on players developing into better players who can figure out how to win than with telling them exactly what to do

Under 16:

- Players should be comfortable dealing with the ball in a variety of situations
- Look to address how basic tactical issues can influence the game
- High and low pressure, keeping your back line connected with your attacking players during possession in your attacking half of the field, or rhythm of play issues can be addressed
- Some basic positional responsibilities and how, as a team, these responsibilities are interconnected can be addressed
- Players should aspire to have technical precision. Accountability for their execution and decisions with the ball should be recognized (how it impacts the game)

Under 19:

- Improvement is based on how well the player has developed up to this point. Therefore, focus on fine-tuning the qualities that already exist
- Areas that can still be influenced greatly are game insight, physical conditioning and attitude
- Practices should always contain the following elements: competition, critical thinking and technical repetition
- Players should be able to recognize the needs of a particular game and how to make the appropriate adjustments
- Different scenarios can be addressed such as, playing in the last 15 minutes of a game with a lead, when the game is tied, or when your team is losing

Technical, Tactical, Physical, and Psychological Characteristics

Technical:

Under 14: Development of individual skill under pressure. Encourage players to take players on 1v1 using moves, shielding of the ball. Quality of 1st touch very important, using different body surfaces to control varied deliveries. Variation of passes should be used on the move over different ranges. Shooting using various techniques over different ranges. Heading techniques should be enhanced. Timing and choice of tackling technique is important.

Under 16: Technique should be trained on the move, done at speed and all with opposition. Balls should be struck cleanly and maturely over distance with accuracy and pace and all under pressure.

Under 19: All technical work performed at speed under match conditions, with individual skill development in warm-up



Goalkeepers: Footwork, set position, general handling - shot stopping, catch or deflect. All dives - collapse, step and save, power step and save, reaction save, recovery saves. Narrowing the angle. Crosses - catching & punching, served from all areas/angles using varied delivery, unopposed and opposed. Distribution - throws - improved range, power, and variation using all techniques. Kicks - improved distance and accuracy with all kicks. Dealing with the back pass under pressure - first touch with both feet, variation of pass

Tactical:

Under 14: Increase speed of play (decision making). Individual 1v1. Principles of attack, defense, and transition further developed. Possession very important, understanding of combination play. Group 2v2, 3v2, 3v3, 4v2, 4v3, 4v4, 5v5. Crossing with appropriate runs. Simple set plays

Under 16: Increase speed of play (decision making). Advanced principles of attack, defense, and transition developed. Possession very important, understanding of combination play. Group 3v3, 4v4, 5v5, 7v7
Crossing with pressure and appropriate runs into the box. Set plays

Under 19: Increase speed of play (decision making). Team/Functional- Understanding the three lines of interaction and collective responsibilities. Principles of attack, defense, and transition reinforced. Crossing under pressure with appropriate runs into the box. Set plays. Zonal marking and man marking. Pressing as a unit in different thirds of the field.

Goalkeeper: Support – angles, distance, playing off the line. Decision making - last line of defense & first line of attack. Communication - working with the defensive unit, recognizing pressure on and of the ball. Presence - 1v1 principles. Positioning. Organization in defending set plays - free kicks and corner kicks

Physical:

Under 14: Flexibility, agility, speed, strength, endurance

Under 16: Flexibility, agility, speed, endurance-aerobic and anaerobic, strength-upper and lower body. Nutrition – appropriate intake in preparation for practice and games. Prevention and care of injuries

Under 19: Flexibility, agility, speed, endurance-aerobic and anaerobic, strength-upper and lower body. Nutrition – appropriate intake in preparation for practice and games. Prevention and care of injuries

Goalkeeper: Plyometric exercises, flexibility, mobility and strengthening exercises. Recovery exercises. Agility exercises - high intensity, low repetitions. Resistance training - low resistance, high reps. Footwork - all directions, planting of feet for change of lateral direction. Speed - acceleration and quickness over a maximum of 18 yards.

Psychological:

Under 14: Fun still important. Imagination, creativity, risk taking become important elements. Maintain discipline. Emergence of the social group. The transitional age from the youth into the adult game. Begin to make decision on their own and reduce reliance on adults

Under 16: Increased concentration, goal setting. Leadership responsibilities emerge. Players can make decisions on their own. More disciplined. Respect for the game and opponent. Some show a fighting spirit-will to win

Under 19: Increased concentration, goal setting. Leadership responsibilities emerge. Increased player responsibilities. More disciplined. Respect for the game and opponent Confident and self-motivated. Will to win more evident.

Goalkeeper: Training and match preparation. Dealing with pressure, competition, and physical confrontations. Composure, and temperament important. Concentration, confidence, and courage important.

Under 14 to Under 19 Practice Structure

- Focus on 1 topic per practice session, e.g. session 1-dribbling, session 2-passing etc
- Split practice session into 4 segments of approximately 15 minutes
- For each segment select an activity from the age appropriate (U14/16/19) Practice Activities curriculum
- Segment 1 – Technical Warm-Up - individual or pair, or small group activities related to practice topic, e.g. 1 player-1 ball, 2 players-1 ball, or 3 players-1 ball
- Segment 2 – Small group activities, e.g. 1v1 to 4v4
- Segment 3 – Large group activities, e.g. 5v5 to 8v8
- Segment 4 – Scrimmage type activities
- Be prepared with an additional 1or 2 activities that you can swap in if an activity isn't quite working out
- Give players a short water break after each segment
- Dribbling and dribbling moves, passing and receiving, shooting, crossing are the main focuses
- Juggling and heading can be included
- Principles of attack and defense – roles of players (shown below)
- Team formation – ideal formation that team plays during scrimmages (shown below)

Principles of Attack (when team has ball)

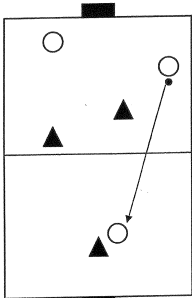
- a. 1st Attacker (penetration - dribble, shoot, pass)
- b. 2nd Attacker (support - angle and position to help player with the ball)
- c. 3rd Attacker (support and mobility - variety of different runs to create gaps in the defense)
- d. Depth and Width (spread the defense to create space)
- e. Improvisation (make attack unpredictable through creativity)

Principles of Defense (when team doesn't have ball)

- a. 1st Defender (pressure - win the ball back as quickly as possible, or delay - gain time to organize the defense through appropriate pressure on the ball)
- b. 2nd Defender (Cover for the 1st defender in an appropriate position to see teammate, ball, and opponent)
- c. 3rd Defender (balance - positioning away from 1st and 2nd defender to cover vital areas)
- d. Compactness (keeping spaces between defenders as small as possible)
- e. Counterattack (win the ball and go to goal as quickly as possible)

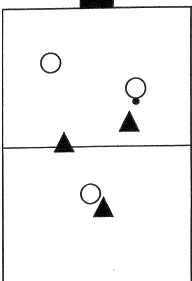
Attacking and Defending Shape

3v3 Attacking Shape



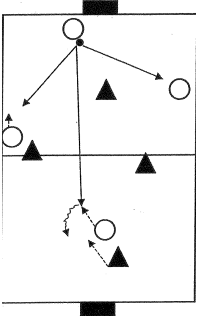
Team of O's have achieved good attacking shape (triangle) by providing length and width on the field. This shape also provides good support to the player on the ball. The close supporting player has taken a position slightly behind the player on the ball while the player in advance of the ball has pushed forward and is available to receive a pass.

3v3 Defending Shape



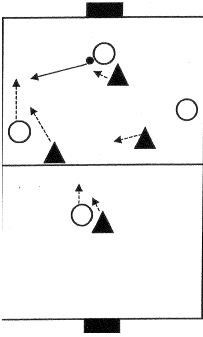
Team of "Triangles" have achieved good defending and starting positions. Pressure is applied to the ball while good cover and balance is provided by the remaining players. Notice the defensive position taken by the defender closet to the goal. The position taken is on the ball side of the opponent so that the defender may intercept a pass into the flank space first. The team of three provides good concentration and depth.

4v4 Attacking Shape



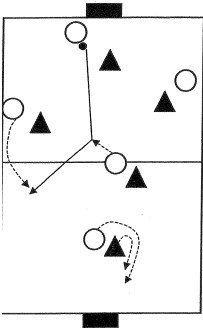
Team of O's have achieved good attacking shape (diamond) and are providing player on the ball with close support on left and right as well as player positioned deep in advance of the ball. Notice the number of passing opportunities provided. Players must achieve these "starting positions" early after recovery of the ball but once achieved they must "free" themselves from close marking by the opponent. Mobility by the individual players to provide good angles and distance of support is important to maintain possession. The through pass is a priority for the player on the ball to achieve.

4v4 Defending Shape



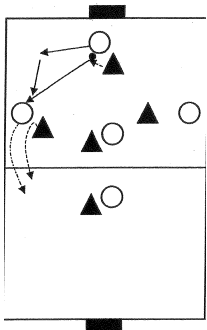
Team of "Triangles" have achieved good defending shape by putting immediate pressure to the ball and limiting the players option to play deep early. The remaining players have concentrated their defensive pressure in the area of the ball. Notice the balancing defender on the right side of the field who is squeezing toward the center. This is made possible by the closet defender immediately closing down the player with the ball and channeling the attacker to the other flank. Also notice how compact the defending team is from front to back.

5v5 Attacking Shape



Team of O's have achieved good attacking shape and are able to provide the player on the ball with a central player in which to play through. Notice the space created in the center of the field by the flank players staying wide. This allows the player with the ball to play a through pass to the checking player. The deep attacking player makes a run away from the space that eventually the wide player will enter on the dribble. This run shows intelligent "playing without the ball" by creating space for the oncoming player by drawing the opponent away.

5v5 Defending Shape



Team of "Triangles" have achieved good defending shape by pushing forward and pressing the attacking team in their half of the field. Notice the position of the central defending player to prevent the attacking team from playing through their central player as well as the flank defender tracking the opponent trying to run behind into space. Transition between attack and defense must be immediate in order to prevent the attacking team from penetrating quickly.