



JUNIOR DIVISION SUMMARY

At this stage players are becoming cognitive and are starting to better comprehend the tactical implications of the game. However, technique must still be a focal point in training. As coaches we must provide the right environment for our players where all the necessary components are present. By no means do you have to follow word for word the sessions provided in this book; soccer is a game that demands creativity from the players as well as the coaches. Feel free to adjust, amend, and change parts of the session to better suit your players.

With that said, we as coaches must encourage thought in their decisions, as well as creativity and the freedom to make mistakes. Players must be comfortable on the ball in situations in which they are under higher pressure. Players are also getting physically stronger so as coaches we should see longer ranges from them in their shooting, passing, and ability to cover more places on the field. Players off the ball become more important and as coaches we should not focus on just the player that has the ball. Players should have a tactical knowledge of what they should be doing while their team is in possession. As coaches be careful what you say to players when speaking in absolutes. The game changes and absolutes do not allow players to think freely.

As you already know, there are players on your team that have a greater capacity to stay focused compared to others. This is true at any level, so coaches must keep explanations short, and to the point. The longer we address players in a group the quicker they lose interest. Remember, you are speaking with 14 and 15 year olds, try to speak with enthusiasm and purpose, this will carry over to your players during training.

In the session plans, you will see the phrase, "make it a competition." It is important that we understand what this means so we do not relay the wrong message to the players. Although we firmly believe that competition is healthy and a great way to provide fun and excitement, winning and losing can not be our focal point. Playing creatively, trying to apply newly learned skills, and performance at this age certainly outweighs the benefits of going undefeated throughout the season. Do not keep your players in the normal positions; encourage them to play in different places. Everyone on the team is a "soccer player"; they attack and defend, and moving players to different positions on game day will expose them to new situations and problems that they must try to deal with in a creative manner. It will make them better soccer players and it will make you a better coach.

This volume will help you in organizing a training session but you get the fun part of motivating and exciting your players to enjoy the game of soccer. Stay positive throughout the session and remember for every coaching point made ("make sure your ankle is locked when you pass"), you need to make four (4) positive comments ("awesome", "great job") Good luck and have fun!