

SEASONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES

At the beginning of each fall and spring, coaches should evaluate their teams and develop seasonal plans to suit their players' and teams' needs. These plans will help guide and inform coaching decisions throughout each week, and should include specific technical, tactical, physical and psychological objectives to be met both in the short and long term. Plans should include 3-4 technical objectives, 3-4 tactical objectives (relating small groups to the team concept), 2-3 physical objectives, and 2-3 psychological objectives for each season. These objectives should be realistic, age appropriate, adaptable and attainable, while remaining challenging for players to achieve in order to maximize growth potential. To determine the goals and objectives for their teams, coaches should evaluate based on the stages below for each age group range. Once the individuals' and teams' current stage is located, coaches can more accurately predict and prepare for their seasonal needs.

Stages of Development Per Age Group Range

Age Group Range	Stage 1 of Development
Under 4 - Under 6	Individual initial technical skill development; Introduction to rules; Learn through play
Under 7 - Under 9	Individual basic technical skill introduction; Spatial awareness and critical thinking
Under 10 - Under 12	Individual technical skill refinement; Understanding of attacking and defending principles
Under 13 - Under 14	Advanced technical skill refinement; Understanding of how lines of players apply the principles of play
Under 15 - Under 19	Advanced technical skill application to team dynamics; Developing team tactical concepts to form a consistent style of play

Age Group Range	Stage 2 of Development
Under 4 - Under 6	Individual basic technical skill introduction; Encouragement of individual creativity
Under 7 - Under 9	Individual basic technical skill development; Introduction of player roles within group play
Under 10 - Under 12	Tactical applications of technique; Increased technical/tactical speed; Decision making and supporting movements within tactical concepts
Under 13 - Under 14	Tactical applications of technique within group concepts; Increased technical/tactical speed; Connecting two lines of players within overall tactical objectives
Under 15 - Under 19	Functional, position specific technical training; Developing team concepts to counter specific opponents

Age Group Range	Stage 3 of Development
Under 7 - Under 9	Individual basic technical skill refinement; Understanding of player roles within group play
Under 10 - Under 12	Introduction to advanced technical concepts; Group dynamics within team shape - connecting players within lines in relation to principles of play
Under 13 - Under 14	Increased technical/tactical speed within group tactical concepts; Connecting all lines of players within tactical concepts - team dynamics
Under 15 - Under 19	Functional, position specific technical training with focus on speed and consistency of execution; Developing a fluid tactical system specific to team strengths

PLANNING A 15 WEEK SEASON - ADVANCED PROGRAMS

Upon identifying a group of players' or teams' current standing within the Stages of Development, coaches should choose technical, tactical, physical and psychological concepts to progress their players into the next stage. Please note that it is possible for teams to be placed within stages behind or ahead of their age group ranges to ensure proper challenges are provided. A sample advanced program seasonal plan is shown below:

Under 14 Team Within Stage 2 of Development (Fall Season Plan)	
Category	Weeks 1 - 5
Technical	Technical applications of receiving directionally and playing short and medium range passes to build the attack in the defensive third
Tactical	Connecting the 1 to the 2, 3, 4, 5 in building play in the defensive third. Connecting the 2, 3, 4, 5 to the 6/8 in building play in the defensive third.
Physical	Increase the aerobic capacity of the players to allow for greater mobility, support and penetration when building the attack
Psychological	Improve the players confidence in possession in the defensive third through positive encouragement from coach and teammates even when mistakes are made
Category	Weeks 6 - 10
Technical	Increase the technical and tactical speed of the players as it relates to combination play within the middle third
Tactical	Connecting the 9/10 to the 6/8 in building play in the middle third. Connecting the 9/10 to the 7/11 in building flank play in the middle third.
Physical	Increase the anaerobic capacity of the players as it relates to making 20-40 yard penetrating runs from the middle to attacking thirds
Psychological	Improve the players' willingness to continue making stretching runs beyond the opposition back 4, whether to receive possession or act as a decoy
Category	Weeks 11 - 15
Technical	Improve the players' ability to play properly timed and deceptive passes in the attacking third
Tactical	Connecting the 2/3 to the 7/11 in the attacking third. Establishing mobility between the 9 and 10 in the attacking third.
Physical	Improve the player's agility as it relates to changing direction, moving sideways and backwards to create space in the attacking third
Psychological	Improve the players' positional discipline as it relates to ensuring that players are covering centrally to prevent counter attacking opportunities upon loss of possession in the attacking third

Notes Regarding Seasonal Planning for Coaches

Coaches should expect to evaluate their teams' progress upon completion of each cycle of 5 weeks. At this time, the decision should be made to progress into the next cycle of training or to continue with the current focus until better performance is obtained. Technical, tactical, physical and psychological objectives within each cycle should be complementary in nature, and progressing into additional cycles should only come once players show satisfactory improvement in performance in all categories.

PLANNING FOR RECREATIONAL AND U4-U6 SEASONS

As the seasons for the club's recreational programs are shorter and contain fewer sessions, coaches must adapt their planning processes to reflect these abbreviated time frames. Considering the developmental needs of younger and recreational players, coaches should also focus on training simpler overall topics and objectives, with the main focus for recreational age groups being individual technical, physical and psychological development, with low emphasis on tactical training. A sample plan for an 8 week recreational season is below:

Under 5 Team Within Stage 1 of Development (Spring Season Plan)	
Category	Weeks 1 - 3
Technical	Stopping, starting and managing the ball with the top, bottom and inside of both feet while dribbling, with a focus on the dominant foot
Tactical	Learning/understanding the rules of play relating to out of bounds and which direction to attack
Physical	Increase the players' body awareness and coordination through games involving the use of all limbs to perform tasks with the ball
Psychological	Foster an environment of fun where players want to come to training and seek additional play opportunities at home with their parents
Category	Weeks 4 - 6
Technical	Ball mastery activities that introduce the concept of turning and changing direction while dribbling
Tactical	Encourage players to try to dribble past defenders and score whenever they get the ball
Physical	Improve the players' balance through activities that involve standing on one foot to perform tasks for very short periods of time
Psychological	Foster an environment of fun where players want to come to training and seek additional play opportunities at home with their parents
Category	Weeks 7 - 8 (moving into Stage 2 of Development)
Technical	Introduce basic 1v1 moves and turns with the bottom of the foot (rolling the ball to escape pressure)
Tactical	Encourage players to try to dribble past defenders and score whenever they get the ball
Physical	Improve the players' balance while in motion through activities that involve moving in all directions with the ball (forward, sideways, backwards)
Psychological	Foster an environment where individual creativity is encouraged, where players want to be on the ball whenever possible during matches

Notes Regarding Seasonal Planning for Recreational Age Groups

Coaches at the recreation level and the Under 4-Under 6 age groups must follow the procedures of evaluation after the conclusion of each cycle of training. If players have not shown satisfactory improvement in all of the areas planned, coaches should continue with their training objectives from the previous cycle. Please note that in the above plan the final two weeks of the season are dedicated to moving the group into the next Stage of Development. If coaches identify that their players need to progress to the next stage they should do so at the earliest moment possible in order to effect higher levels of development. As recreation rosters change from season to season, tactical training should be limited to understanding various player roles within the team shape. If players are ready for higher levels of instruction, coaches should refer them to the club's advanced programs.

WEEKLY PLANNING GUIDELINES

Once coaches have identified their seasonal objectives, they should begin breaking down their larger objectives into more specific training topics to establish weekly plans. These plans should be progressive from session to session and week to week, and should include all components of development (technical, tactical, physical and psychological) for the topics being chosen. There are many factors for coaches to consider when setting weekly plans and choosing which topics to address within a cycle of training, and these include:

- number of training sessions per week and desired *physical intensity level within each session*
- player fatigue levels caused by club team activities and additional school functions
- player performance during preceding matches - addressing team needs from evaluation of match
- player retention and execution of previous week or weeks' training topics
- preparation for teams' next match

Having considered the factors that affect their teams throughout each week, coaches should layout their training topics for weekly sessions using the guidelines below.

Work to Rest Ratios Within Weekly Training Sessions

As coaches begin to prepare their weekly plans and training sessions, consideration should be given to the desired physical intensity level within each session. This concept follows along with the Periodization of Training set forth by U.S. Soccer, which shows how intense activity affects player fatigue over an extended length of time, which can lead to overuse injury if improperly managed. The best way to manage the physical intensity within a training session is to use intervals of work and rest periods within each training activity. Based on the timing of a training session in relation to other sessions or match play, coaches should raise and lower the level of physical exertion to guarantee optimal performance in weekly matches.

Intervals	Intensity
1:1 Work to Rest	Low
2:1 Work to Rest	Medium
3:1 Work to Rest	High

By using the intervals above, coaches can provide physical demands for conditioning and recovery without detracting from training time.

Sample Weekly Cycles for Club Programs and the Main Themes Per Day

	U4-U6	U7-U9	U10-U12	U13-U14	U15-U19
Mon.		Technical Small Sided Act.			
Tue.	Technical Small Sided Act.		Technical Addressing Needs	Addressing Needs Technical/Tactical	Addressing Needs Functional Technical Small Sided Act.
Wed.			Technical Small Sided Act.	Technical/Tactical Small Sided Act.	Technical/Tactical Small Sided Act. Expanded Act.
Thu.			Technical Expanded Act.	Small Sided Act. Expanded Act.	Team Tactical Expanded Act.
Fri.		Technical Small Sided Act.			
Sat.	Match Play	Match Play			
Sun.			Match Play	Match Play	Match Play

ADVANCED PROGRAM TRAINING GUIDELINES

Coaches within our advanced programs should consider the guidelines below when creating training session plans. Coaches should build understanding of a topic from simple to complex over the course of the entire week, in addition to during the course of each training session. Particularly in the older age groups, it should not be uncommon for coaches to focus more training time on certain portions of their training sessions (technical, small sided, expanded) based on the day the session falls within the weekly cycle of training.

Under 5/6 Academy Program

<u>Sessions Per Week</u>	1 training session per week, in addition to Recreational participation.
<u>Length of Sessions</u>	1 hour per training session. 35 minutes of technical/physical development. 20 minutes of scrimmage. 5 minutes of break time built in.
<u>Session Outlines and Training Content</u>	Contain 2-3 technical activities and 1 scrimmage activity. 3:1 work to rest ratios, but intervals must be short (1-2 min.). Activities must be based on fun and learning by manipulating players' own soccer ball. 1:1 ball to player ratio during technical activities. Psychological factors run throughout.

Notes: The Under 5/6 player is at a stage of mental development where they only perceive themselves and their needs within the world and training must be geared toward this mental state. Players should be working on individual ball control and manipulation of their body to develop technically and physically. Coaches should ensure that scrimmages are always conducted at the end of training, and that there is a strong focus on individual creativity.

Under 7 - Under 9 Junior Academy Program

<u>Sessions Per Week</u>	2 training sessions per week. 1 match per week.
<u>Length of Sessions</u>	1 hour and 15 minutes per training session. 35 minutes of technical/physical warm-up/development. 15 minutes of small sided activity. 20 minutes of scrimmage. 5 minutes of cool down and summary.
<u>Session Outlines and Training Content</u>	Contain 1-2 technical activities, 1 small sided activity and 1 match like activity. 2:1/3:1 work to rest ratios, with intervals of 1-3 minutes of work at a time. Activities must be based on individual skill development, with competition throughout. Technical focus should be on individual creativity and passing/receiving. Psychological factors run throughout training.

Notes: The Under 7-9 Junior Academy will make use of several different training protocols, including pool training, station work and training in small groups. The Director of Youth Development will communicate when and how to apply different training methods within sessions. Players should be building toward high level competition at the Travel level.

Under 10 - Under 12 Travel Program Developmental Phase

<u>Sessions Per Week</u>	3 training sessions per week. 1 match per week.
<u>Length of Sessions</u>	1 hour and 30 minutes per training session. 5 minutes of physical warmup. 35 minutes of technical/physical development. 20 minutes of small sided activities. 20 minutes of match play. 10 minutes of cool down and summary.
<u>Session Outlines and Training Content</u>	Contain 1 technical activity with several progressions, 1 small sided and 1 match like activity. Most common work to rest ratios should be 2:1 and 3:1 with intervals of 1-4 minutes of dedicated work. Technical focus should be on individual possession and passing/receiving with introductory tactical implications of the technique. Psychological factors run throughout, especially competition.

Notes: Players in this phase of the Travel Program should be moving toward the refining of their passing and receiving techniques for use in group possession and penetration. Training within this phase should begin to become specific to different attacking tactics such as switching the point of the attack, combination play and using the flanks to penetrate.

ADVANCED PROGRAM TRAINING GUIDELINES

Under 13 - Under 14 Travel Program Competitive Phase

<u>Sessions Per Week</u>	3 training sessions per week. 1 match per week.
<u>Length of Sessions</u>	1 hour and 30 minutes per training session. 10 minutes of physical warmup. 25 minutes of technical/tactical development. 20 minutes of small sided activities. 10 minutes of expanded activity leading into 15 minutes of match play. 10 minutes of cool down and summary.
<u>Session Outlines and Training Content</u>	Contain 1 technical progressive activity, 1 small sided, 1 expanded and 1 match like activity. Intervals should be based on the location of the session within the weekly cycle of training. Intervals of 1-6 minutes of dedicated work should be prevalent. Activities should be geared toward the tactical application of technical skills, and the building of relationships between lines of players within the team shape. Psychological factors throughout training, with competition paramount.

Notes: Players within the competitive phase of the Travel Program are expected to execute technical skills with a high level of consistency and proficiency. While a portion of training time is still devoted to technical development, the time spent working on basic skills should be short, and the focus should be on increasing the speed at which players can apply these techniques during play. Tactically, training should begin to become specific to certain lines of players, and connecting lines to those ahead and behind becomes important. Competition and desire to perform are paramount for player success.

Under 15 - Under 19 Travel Program Elite Phase

<u>Sessions Per Week</u>	3 training sessions per week. 1 match per week.
<u>Length of Sessions</u>	1 hour and 30 minutes per training session. 10 minutes of physical warmup. 25 minutes of functional technical and tactical development, leading into 20 minutes of small sided activities. 10 minutes of expanded activity leading into 15 minutes of match play. 10 minutes of cool down and summary.
<u>Session Outlines and Training Content</u>	Contain 1 functional technical, 1 small sided, 1 expanded and 1 match like activity. Intervals should be based on the location of the session within the weekly cycle of training. Intervals of 1-5 minutes of dedicated work should be prevalent. Activities should be geared toward the creation of team tactical concepts, utilizing higher level technical concepts related to possession, combination play and other attacking styles. Psychological factors throughout training, with competition paramount.

Notes: Players within the elite phase of the Travel Program are expected to be able to execute and apply techniques to tactical applications at high speed, consistently throughout training and matches. Functional technical training should be utilized to train players to the specific demands of certain roles within the team shape. This functional training should then be applied to small sided and expanded activities over the course of training sessions and weekly cycles. Tactical objectives should be oriented toward creating a team dynamic and style of play consistent with the values set forth in this document.

Summary of Advanced Program Training and Planning Guidelines

Training within the advanced programs should be geared toward creating a competitive developmental environment for all. Sessions should follow a simple to complex dynamic for all aspects of player development over the course of a day, week or season. Training sessions should utilize a variety of work to rest and ball to player ratios, as coaches have more opportunities for training throughout each week.

Coaches should impose demands upon players at the highest level possible and training sessions should be a time for dedicated and intensive learning. The expectation for players within these programs is that they have committed to their individual development, and that they are coming to training sessions and matches with a desire to perform at the best of their ability.

RECREATIONAL AND U4-U6 TRAINING GUIDELINES

For recreational coaches and coaches at the Under 4-Under 6 age groups, much of the information contained in the remaining pages involving weekly and training session planning must be applied in a different manner within their own coaching experiences. Instructing players at these levels is a unique opportunity and challenge for coaches, regardless of their own experience level within the game or time spent coaching within advanced programs. Some guidelines for how to approach these players and their needs are below:

Under 4 - Under 6 Recreational Program

<u>Sessions Per Week</u>	1 training session per week. Under 5-6 also have 1 match per week.
<u>Length of Sessions</u>	1 hour per training session. 35 minutes of technical/physical development. 20 minutes of scrimmage. 5 minutes of break time built in.
<u>Session Outlines and Training Content</u>	Contain 2-3 technical activities and 1 match like activity. 3:1 work to rest ratios, but intervals must be short (1-2 min.). Activities must be based on fun and learning by manipulating players' own soccer ball. 1:1 ball to player ratio during technical activities. Psychological factors run throughout.

Notes: The Under 4-6 player is at a stage of mental development where they only perceive themselves and their needs within the world and training must be geared toward this mental state. Expect players to become upset if a teammate is playing with their ball, and expect the players to bunch around the ball at all times. Rather than fight this occurring, encourage players to navigate out of it with skill.

Under 7 - Under 9 Recreational Program

<u>Sessions Per Week</u>	1 training session per week. 1 match per week.
<u>Length of Sessions</u>	1 hour per training session. 5 minutes of physical warmup. 30 minutes of technical/physical development. 20 minutes of scrimmage. 5 minutes of cool down and summary.
<u>Session Outlines and Training Content</u>	Contain 2 technical activities and 1 match like activity. 3:1 work to rest ratios, with intervals lengthening to 2-3 minutes of work at a time. Activities must be based on individual skill development, with an element of fun competition. 1:2 ball to player ratio during technical activities is allowed in Stage 2 and 3 of Development. Psychological factors run throughout training.

Notes: The Under 7-9 player is at a stage of development where they can begin sharing their personal belongings (their ball) with a friend or two. Training must be geared toward this mental transition, and passing/receiving can become a more prominent part of technical development. The focus should remain on the individual and their skill progression.

Under 10 - Under 12 Recreational Program

<u>Sessions Per Week</u>	2 training sessions per week. 1 match per week.
<u>Length of Sessions</u>	1 hour per training session. 5 minutes of physical warmup. 25 minutes of technical/physical development. 10 minutes of small sided activities. 15 minutes of scrimmage. 5 minutes of cool down and summary.
<u>Session Outlines and Training Content</u>	Contain 2 technical, 1 small sided and 1 match like activity. Various work to rest ratios are possible, but most common should be 2:1 and 3:1 with intervals of 2-3 minutes of dedicated work. Activities should be fun and competitive but with an expectation for individual accountability. No more than 1:3 ball to player ratios in technical activities, 1:4/5 in small sided. Psych. factors throughout.

Notes: The Under 10-12 player is at a stage of development where they can understand how individuals function within a group. Passing, receiving and shooting should become the most prominent part of technical development. The focus should remain on the individual and their skill progression, but emphasis can be placed on individual decision making.

RECREATIONAL AND U4-U6 TRAINING GUIDELINES

Under 13 - Under 14 Recreational Program

<u>Sessions Per Week</u>	2 training sessions per week. 1 match per week.
<u>Length of Sessions</u>	1 hour and 15 minutes per training session. 10 minutes of physical warmup. 25 minutes of technical/physical development. 15 minutes of small sided activities. 15 minutes of scrimmage. 10 minutes of cool down and summary.
<u>Session Outlines and Training Content</u>	Contain 2 technical, 1 small sided and 1 expanded or match like activity. Various work to rest ratios are possible, but most common should be 2:1 and 3:1 with intervals of 2-3 minutes of dedicated work. Activities should be fun and competitive but with an expectation for individual accountability. No more than 1:3 ball to player ratios in technical activities, 1:4/5 in small sided. Psychological factors throughout training.

Notes: The Under 13-14 player is at a stage of development where they can understand how groups function within a team. Passing, receiving and shooting should be the most prominent part of technical development, and how they relate to decisions players make on the field should be addressed while being trained. The focus is still on the individual and their skill progression, but correct decision making as individuals and in groups should be expected once it has been covered in training.

Under 15 - Under 19 Recreational Program

<u>Sessions Per Week</u>	2 training sessions per week. 1 match per week.
<u>Length of Sessions</u>	1 hour and 15 minutes per training session. 10 minutes of physical warmup. 20 minutes of technical/physical development. 15 minutes of small sided activities. 10 minutes of expanded activity leading into 10 minutes of scrimmage. 10 minutes of cool down and summary.
<u>Session Outlines and Training Content</u>	Contain 1 technical activity with several progressions, 1 small sided, 1 expanded activity that leads into a match. Longer intervals of 2-5 minutes of dedicated work in 2:1 and 3:1 ratios should be common. Activities should be competitive, and recreational players at these ages can be challenged more with an expectation for performance of trained skills. 1:3/4 ball to player ratios in technical activities, 1:4/5/6 in small sided. Psychological factors throughout training.

Notes: The Under 15-19 player is at a stage of development where they can understand how the team shape should function across all lines and individual players. Passing, receiving and shooting should be the most prominent part of technical development, and how the execution of various skills affects the entire group or team of players can be covered while these skills are trained. Players at this age group of recreation soccer have occasionally decided just to be there for the fun and social setting, so coaches must keep this in mind while planning and preparing training. Sessions must be challenging enough for those who want it, but also have an element of fun competition for those there for less serious purposes.

Summary of Recreational Training and Planning Guidelines

It is important for coaches at the recreational age groups, particularly Under 4-Under 6 to note that these players require learning through activities rather than drilled instruction. Training sessions must be geared toward fun, competitive activities that require players to complete tasks with their ball, or their ball and a partner or small group. At all recreational levels, unless players are participating in scrimmages or matches, the ball to player ratio should rarely exceed 1:4/5, and for the Under 4-Under 6 ages, it should very rarely exceed 1:1 unless the team has progressed to Stage 2 of Development or beyond. As recreational teams change from season to season, tactical instruction should be limited to introducing players to roles within the team shape, and players or coaches needing or wanting the opportunity to participate in high level tactical instruction should seek out participation within the club's advanced programs.

KEY TECHNICAL COACHING POINTS

Ensuring that players' basic technical skills are properly coached is one of the most important aspects of a young players' early development within the game. These skills are the foundation upon which all other knowledge and ability within the game is built. Below are step by step guides for coaches to follow when teaching young players how to execute the basic technical skills within our game.

Receiving with the Foot, Thigh or Chest

- Step 1 - Look** Identify pressure and support, determine where to direct next touch
- Step 2 - Prepare** Adjust body to see where ball is coming from & where it needs to go, adjust to pass
- Step 3 - Choose** Determine which surface player will be receiving ball with
- Step 4 - Present** Expose largest part surface possible to the ball at the correct time
- Step 5 - Lock** Tighten surface to prepare for touch - "heel down, toe up" for inside of foot
- Step 6 - Touch** Cushion ball or push ball toward next destination
- Step 7 - Play** Shoot, pass, dribble, then move to support or help again

Tactical Implications of Receiving

Players should determine whether touch should be directional, and if so, why and how far away? Players should always attempt to receive forward in order to penetrate if possible, before deciding if they should receive sideways or backwards to avoid pressure. Players should understand that the quality of the pass to them can often determine the type of touch (penetrative or possessive) that they take, particularly when under pressure.

Passing with the Inside of the Foot

- Step 1 - Look** Identify pressure and support, determine specific target (inside of player's right or left foot)
- Step 2 - Prepare** Preparing for a pass is following all the steps of receiving properly
- Step 3 - Step** Place balancing foot a half ball width away, and line middle of foot up with middle of ball
- Step 4 - Point** Point big toe of balancing foot toward the specific target that has been chosen
- Step 5 - Balance** Bend standing knee, raise arm of same side as balancing leg, chest and head over the ball
- Step 6 - Lock** Heel down, toe up to pass to specific target that has been identified
- Step 7 - Punch** Strike through middle of the ball, with short back lift and short follow through
- Step 8 - Play** Move to support pass or to create space/penetrate on the run after pass

Tactical Implications of Passing with the Inside of the Foot

Players should attempt to penetrate when possible, look wide second and or play a backward possessive pass third. Players should determine if target of pass needs the ball played firmly or softer due to pressure, and if ball should be played to the front or back foot of the receiver. Players should determine whether pass should be played into space for the receiving player to move on to, or whether the ball should be delivered directly to feet. Players should be constantly looking for where to play next pass, then they should look for specific targets when they think they are going to get the ball, and then again as the ball travels to them.

The components of a quality pass are - pace, accuracy, timing, deception, and texture (bent, bouncing, smooth).

Notes Regarding These Technical Foundations

Receiving and passing with the inside of the foot are the technical foundations upon which the club's style of play is built. All players must be able to take an effective and quality first touch, and deliver properly timed, weighted and accurate passes for our teams to be able to perform to the highest levels. While there will always be a time and place for creative and/or penetrative dribbling, or dribbling for possession out of tight areas, our players are taught to manage pressure through passing and supporting movement first.

KEY TECHNICAL COACHING POINTS

Dribbling with the Top of the Foot

- Step 1 - Look** Identify empty space, or identify opportunity to penetrate in a 1v1 situation
- Step 2 - Choose** Determine whether to take a large touch to explode into space, or smaller touches for control
- Step 3 - Lock** Big toe of dribbling foot down and in to expose outside of laces to ball
- Step 4 - Push** Push forward with locked ankle through the middle of the ball, natural running motion
- Step 5 - Create** If 1v1 - penetrate behind with creative move, otherwise create space for a pass
- Step 6 - Play** Decide whether to penetrate with a different method or maintain the dribble

Tactical Implications of Dribbling with the Top of the Foot

Players should properly identify moments to dribble and moments to pass, choosing to carry into open space or penetrate in 1v1 situations in appropriate attacking areas. Players should understand how to maintain individual possession when under pressure, and be able to appropriately apply a big or small touch to the ball when required. Deceptive dribbling can also provide a change of pace to the attack, providing a balance to possession.

Shooting and Striking Driven and Flighted Balls

- Step 1 - Look** Identify shooting or striking over distance opportunity, or chance to create opportunity
- Step 2 - Prepare** Quality first touch - slightly further ahead than for passing, body open to target already
- Step 3 - Hop** Approach ball w/power, balancing foot half body width away, mid. foot to mid. ball
- Step 4 - Point** Point big toe of balancing foot, hips and shoulders toward the specific target
- Step 5 - Balance** Bend standing knee, same side arm, chest and head over/behind ball dependent on technique
- Step 6 - Lock** Toe of striking foot down and out, foot rotated slightly backward for flighted ball
- Step 7 - Strike** With top bone of foot, through middle of ball for shot, slightly under middle for flighted
- Step 8 - Land** On striking foot, finishing body motion by landing toward target

Tactical Implications of Shooting and Striking Driven and Flighted Balls

Players should understand proper moments to take a shot on - within personal shooting range, at the proper angle, without pressure/with the ability to quickly evade pressure before shooting. Players should understand the proper application of driven and flighted balls, particularly how they relate to switching play and crossing from the flanks.

1v1 Defending Technique

- Step 1 - Look** Identify danger, decide when to pressure, identify supporting attackers and defenders
- Step 2 - Choose** Decide where to force play - spot on field, location of second defenders, attacker strengths
- Step 3 - Approach** At speed to close distance, slowing down 3-4 steps away to control body, arc approach
- Step 4 - Turn** Turn body to prepare for defensive movement and tackling opportunities
- Step 5 - Adjust** Disciplined, staying between attacker and objective if attacker has good control of ball
- Step 6 - Tackle** Choose proper moment to tackle, choose type of tackle - block, poke, shield
- Step 7 - Counter** Immediate transition to attack upon winning possession

Tactical Implications of 1v1 Defending

Players should be able to recognize the proper moments to become pressuring defender. Players should understand where to force attackers if possible - wide, toward second defenders, away from goal, toward weak foot. Players should understand how body shape of defender changes based on where the 1v1 confrontation takes place, sideways stance on flanks, more square to attacker when ball is central or near goal. Players should understand how to position body to eliminate passing options in 1v1 situations.

KEY TECHNICAL COACHING POINTS

Heading for U12 and Up

- Step 1 - Look** Identify heading requirement and locate target for header (goal, clearance, support)
- Step 2 - Prepare** Adjust body and judge flight of ball, engage in physical battle with opponent if necessary
- Step 3 - Decide** Which type of header - attacking or defensive, whether to jump or not to jump
- Step 4 - Watch** Track ball onto forehead until last possible moment, tighten neck and close mouth
- Step 5 - Retract** Roll shoulders forward, draw head back keeping a straight spine alignment
- Step 6 - Attack** Drive forehead through center of ball rolling shoulders back at the same time
- Step 7 - Move** Support play, apply pressure or follow attempted shot in case of rebound

Tactical Implications of Heading

Players should know the difference between attacking and defensive style headers and be able to apply them at the correct moments. Players should be able to properly judge the flight of the ball and understand how to use their bodies to effectively create opportunities to head the ball. Players who perform central defensive roles and central attacking roles must be particularly proficient at challenging for and winning headers.

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

Attacking Principles

1. Penetration - movement, dribbling, passing, shooting to break beyond defenders into more advantageous positions on the field
2. Support - movements to provide immediate assistance for player in possession of the ball
3. Width - providing wide support and options for player in possession or the team shape as a whole
4. Depth - providing options behind the player in possession or the team shape as whole
5. Mobility - creative and deceptive movement to create space for attacking purposes, interchanging of positions with other players
6. Improvisation - creative dribbling, passing and movement to provide opportunities to penetrate in 1v1 and group situations
7. Awareness - player and team recognition of potential opponent counter attacking opportunities, effective covering of central spaces to provide depth and be in position to stop opposition penetration

Defending Principles

1. Immediate chase - actions of the nearest player to a loss of possession to attempt to win the ball back before opposition can begin an attack
2. Awareness - player and team recognition of danger and of counter attacking opportunities
3. Pressure - preventing opposition penetration and making play predictable for rest of team
4. Cover - support provided to pressuring player, tracking of opposition runs and taking away opposition passing options
5. Balance - establishing team shape by players further from the ball, tracking attacking runs
6. Discipline - to avoid diving in 1v1, recovering
7. Compactness - team shape to deny penetration, both horizontally and vertically to limit opposition options in attack
8. Communication - players providing organizational information to those around them, identification of danger

KEY THEMES FOR ADVANCED PROGRAM COACHES

Strive to conduct practices that are educational and fun.

Training sessions should be geared toward learning with specific goals and objectives that players are striving to obtain. While the environment should be one of high focus, work rate and dedication to improving, it is important for coaches to build in elements of fun to ensure players are maintaining high levels of commitment and a positive attitude toward training.

Fitness should be built into training through the use of intervals and high intensity activities and games.

The main builder of player fitness should be through training activities with a ball being manipulated, either individually or in small group settings. The instances of fitness activities conducted without a ball should be limited, and generally only in the U13-U19 age groups when a severe lack of pre-season player preparation has occurred. Throughout the season, players should be attaining improved fitness through training and matches.

The details matter, and those who mind the details are often the most successful.

Coaches and players should be extremely mindful of the details of training and playing, as small breakdowns make a big difference on the field. Coaches should recognize and correct even minor technical and tactical mistakes, as these create poor habits that become larger issues later in a players' career. Players should concentrate on every small technical and tactical detail presented to them by their coaches, and should seek to refine their game along the lines presented in training.

Hold high expectation standards for performance and player work rate, attitude, and communication.

Creating an environment of high expectation for performance is critical to motivating players to push themselves to improve within training and matches. Coaches who are accepting of sub-standard work rate, poor attitude and bad communication habits within their teams will always be fighting an uphill battle to have their players reach their full potential. Set high but attainable expectations and players will be appropriately pushed to succeed.

Club policies on training attire, discipline, warm-up and cool-down, and overall professionalism matter.

Coaches should ensure that their players and teams are abiding by club policies regarding pre-training and match preparation, and post-training and match protocol. These policies are put in place to promote an environment of professionalism and responsibility for the youth athletes within the club. When all the coaches are delivering the same message regarding these matters, the club is stronger as a whole.

The team can only be as competitive as the least competitive member(s) allows.

It is important for coaches to consider how to challenge each member of their team appropriately to promote growth in all of their players. Coaches should ensure that they are spending equal time developing each tier of players within their teams and programs. Particularly in the U4-U14 age groups, players have not yet hit their growth spurts and some may lag behind physically. Coaches should ensure that all players are provided the opportunity to improve their technical, tactical and psychological bases, so that when they finish their physical maturation they are prepared to compete with their teammates.

Development is a long term process and the bigger picture must always be considered.

Proper player and team development occurs over the course of many years, with many different factors affecting how successful a player or team can become. It is important for coaches to remember that the bigger picture is and will always be the creation of successful and productive members of society first, successful and productive soccer players second, with winning in the here and now a third consideration. Especially in the youngest age groups, it can often be easy to put players in positions where they can ensure a team win through superior physical prowess, or through the use of one or two outstanding players. Coaches must ensure that they are developing players in a wholistic manner, with an eye on the future rather than the present, and occasionally forgoing immediate winning for future player and team success.

KEY THEMES FOR RECREATIONAL COACHES

Strive to conduct practices that are fun and educational.

Practices for the recreational program should be centered on enjoyment of participation in the sport, while providing information and foundational training to players for use throughout their soccer careers. It is important for coaches within the Recreational Program to remember that not every player within their team will be committed to long term development within the sport. However, every player within the program should leave with a life time love of the game, and with a desire to remain involved and have their families involved later in life.

Professionalism and responsibility are important traits that should be expected of all participants at all levels.

Even if a player within the Recreational Program has no intention of ever pursuing higher level soccer training and competition, all players should be expected to maintain standards of professionalism and responsibility both on and off the fields. All players should be respectful of those around them, should be responsible for letting their coaches know of absences (parents can do so in the U5-U8 age groups), and for ensuring that they are understanding and accommodating of teammates who may have different objectives within the game than they do.

Player decision making is vital, and coaches should facilitate and encourage individual and group problem solving.

Soccer is unlike other sports in that it is player rather than coach driven. Instantaneous player decision making is the most important facet of the sport, and the players who makes the best decisions during play end up being the most successful long term. To create good decision makers, coaches must create an environment where players solve problems on their own and within small teammate groups, rather than providing all of the answers all of the time. “Joystick” coaching, where coaches constantly tell players where to move and what to do creates a negative environment by removing the players’ ability to make their own choices, by increasing the fear of failure within players, by eliminating player creativity and individuality within play, and by eliminating the players’ need to develop their tactical and psychological skills during play.

All players attack and all players defend (situationally including and excepting the goalkeeper).

All players should be pushing forward to help with the attack, and dropping back towards their own goal to help defend. There are different levels of moving forward and backwards that certain positions tend to abide by, however no field players should be standing at or near their defensive 18 yard box when the ball is in the attacking half. A good rule of thumb to follow is that whatever half the ball is in, all players should be in or moving toward that half (with the exception of your goalkeeper going too far forward). Having defenders stay put when the ball moves forward is a negative tactic that creates poor habits and mentalities, and it prevents those players from potentially helping their team create and score goals.

Players should only use 1 touch when under extreme pressure from the opposition.

Coaches should train and encourage players to play with at least 2 touches whenever possible. This allows optimal time for the individual to determine their next action, and optimal time to properly execute the technique required to complete that action. The use of 1 touch should be reserved for moments when a player is under extreme pressure from defenders, or needs to execute a technique quickly to take advantage of potential chance creation or scoring opportunity.

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