



ASA Youth Academy – U10/U9 – A Two Year Cohort Program

MISSION: To promote player development over team development in a child centered environment.

Why: The purpose is to increase enjoyment and retention.

Objectives:

1. Focus on the technical development of each player
2. Reduce the emphasis on players and coaches to earn results

When: Fall 2016/Spring 2017

Who: Clubs/associations must complete the application and be accepted to participate. Clubs/associations are reviewed annually for acceptance into the program. The players will combine two birth years for players to be able to play up one year and down one year. More importantly, the goal is to provide a wider range of developmental abilities thus helping players find developmentally appropriate learning opportunities.

- 2007 Birth Year- 10 and under
- 2008 Birth Year- 9 and under

Rationale for 2 year age cohort: These age groups are known as the “golden age” of learning right before the peak height velocity (growth spurt). All children develop at different rates and development is not always linear. By combining these two age groups together, player development should be enhanced through creating a larger player pool to account for a wide range of ability levels both within and across associations/clubs. This includes combined training sessions and creating more appropriate match opportunities. I.e. early bloomers or more advanced 9U players may sometimes find a good fit with other 10U players from both inter-club and intra-club opportunities.

What is an Academy?

An Academy Program focuses on the complete development of each player. A properly organized Academy provides an educational environment for boys and girls to learn through playing; the main emphasis is of enjoying the process of technical development and gradual tactical understanding. The main goal of the ASA Youth Academy is to promote player development over team development in a child centered environment. This should help provide a program structure that meets the needs of all clubs and associations in Alabama. We feel that clubs must be empowered to provide a variety of programming options for their players including recreational and competitive play and that the Academy Program provides both the flexibility and structure to create a special program for boys and girls U10 and under. By using the ASA Youth Academy’s standards, best practice recommendations and guidelines, which are included in this manual, member associations and clubs can foster programs of all sizes and shapes that can grow and flourish.



Why use an Academy format versus a regular league format? (aka Goals and Benefits)

- To emphasize player development over team development and focus on the technical development of each child without the pressures of short-term wins/losses/results.
- To develop ball skill and decision making in the game.
- To create a fun and dynamic atmosphere for players.
- To help educate parents on how to understand the sport and their role as a supporter of their child's development.
- To prepare younger players for the possible transition into competitive soccer.
- To offer a program that will follow recommendations and guidelines from US Youth Soccer and the United States Soccer Federation for small-sided play.
- To help reduce travel and lower the expense for younger players and their families.

COSTS:

- \$200 Application fee per association/club per year (2016/2017)
- \$25 Player Registration Fee (full year 2016/2017)
- \$150 for Fall Academy Cup (per team)
- \$150 for Spring Academy Cup (per team)

STANDARDS For Youth Academy Members

The focus for the ASA Youth Academy is on the training environment rather than on matches or tournaments. The training grounds are where great teachers can help further the technical development of each player in an environment that encourages players to make mistakes. Therefore, every member must have a Youth Academy Director that possesses the National Youth License/Certificate. It is also crucial that all YA members adhere to the training ratio of at least 2:1 training session to matches and that the plan follows a curriculum.

YOUTH ACADEMY DIRECTOR (YAD)

Each association must have an ASA Youth Academy Director who acts as the liaison between the local academy and the ASA Youth Soccer Academy Committee.

- YAD must possess the National Youth Certificate from US Youth Soccer or National Youth License from US Soccer

CURRICULUM

Associations must submit a curriculum for each season. Assistance in curriculum planning is available to all ASA members. The benefits of having a well-planned and progressive curriculum are many fold:

- Gives the club identity
- Thorough educational experience for the players that graduates a 'complete' athlete/person
- Gets everyone on the same page
- Coaching staff works as a team rather than a bunch of individual coaches
- Blueprint for staff training
- Easier to monitor and assess effectiveness of programs
- Selling point for the club and branding
- Keeps administrators and parents from interfering with technical issues
- Curriculum will be reviewed by ASA Technical Director and Committee.
 - › Should include physical literacy and the ADM on the Academy Landing Page
 - › Should include the club's style of play
 - › Should include basic skill sets that the club wants players to have accomplished by the end of each season:
 - » Technical/Tactical/Physical/Psychological
 - › Can include example training sessions/staple activities
- The curriculum must be posted to the club's website.
- The ASA suggested curriculum is based on the EPD Curriculum and sessions.
- ASA will provide help in a Parent Education/Interaction Presentation (10-12 slides)

TRAINING ENVIRONMENT

- Players participate in pool training format (players are matched up developmentally in smaller groups with a preferred ratio of 10 players to each qualified coach).
- Players may not participate in more than 3 training sessions per week

COACHING STANDARDS

The ideal academy coach should, first and foremost, be one who loves to work with young children and who possess charisma. Infectious enthusiasm is a strong asset with players this age, since inspiring a passion and love for the game is the number one priority at the academy level. It must be fun for both the players and the coach. This is not a job for anyone who regards it as a chore.

- Each Youth Academy Coach must possess the USSF F License and the USSF E License within 1st year of coaching in the Youth Academy
 - › Assistant Coaches must possess both of the USYS Youth Modules.
- YAD must ensure that all coaches meet the proper standards.
 - › It is preferred that all academy coaches also obtain the National Youth Certificate. New coaches will be expected to make reasonable efforts to obtain the proper certification/license level in a reasonable time frame.

GOALKEEPER TRAINING

- Goalkeeping will also be a major training component as all players should learn how to play the GK position.
 - › ASA will assist in providing goalkeeper coaches clinics.

EDUCATIONAL INTERACTIONS

- Associations must host at least 2 Parent Education/Interactions per season.
- Players must receive 2 written evaluations annually.

ASSESSMENTS/TRYOUTS

- Players will be entered into the pool from Assessments/Evaluations rather than “Tryouts”

STANDARDS FOR MATCHES

Matches are why we train- for the fun and enjoyment of competing to do our best. We want the Academy players to desire to compete, but to not judge their success on results (wins/losses). Therefore, it is important that we provide a plan for the standards of matches for the proper environment that includes player, parent, coach, and referee interaction.

Basic Rules

- › Will follow all US Soccer Player Development Initiatives, including 7v7 and the build-out line
- › No scores will be kept/published
- › Each player will be guaranteed at least one half of playing time per match (preferably more)
- › Players may not participate in more than 100 minutes each day.
- › Players may participate in upwards of 20-30 matches per season, but must train in at least twice as many sessions than matches (this includes tournaments and showcases). For instance, if a group only plays in 12 matches, that is ok, and they must train at least 24 times. The YA for each club is responsible for tracking and reporting as needed.

Match Formats

- › Matches can be played traditionally or in a jamboree/festival format setting (3 X 30 minute games in 1 day)
 - › Traditional- regular 2 halves X 25 minutes.
 - › Jamboree- sets of 30-35 minute games.
- › Clubs are encouraged to only set-up Academy play dates on Saturdays. The idea is to not have weekday games so that each club can focus on the periodization of training. It is also suggested that clubs attend a playdate only every other weekend.
- › Members are encouraged to schedule at least two games per each day (especially if more than one hour driving distance).

Finding Appropriate Match-Ups/Play Dates

- › The YAD will split their players into pools of groups of 7-10 players. For the first game, the coaching staff for each club is to randomly balance their groups, if they have more than one.
- › After the first game or before the second game, the clubs can then bring all of the players together to work on various skills and techniques for 30 minutes.
- › For the second game of the day, if the clubs wish, they may group the players by abilities. They should inform the other YADs that they are doing this so that everyone is on the same page.

SCHEDULING YOUTH ACADEMY MATCHES

Ownership is placed into the hands of each association/club to schedule appropriate match-ups. We encourage each club to schedule matches that are the best fit for their group(s) of players. Clubs may also choose to host an Academy Play-Date and invite multiple clubs. To see what an Academy Play-Date should look like, please visit the FAQ page.

Club-centric Scheduling

- Associations/clubs have the ability to schedule their own playdates that are developmentally appropriate and fit their club's overall schedule (accounting for field availability, tournaments, etc).
- It is up to each club to schedule the matches for their Youth Academy with other ASA Youth Academy member clubs. Associations/clubs may host events and may invite specific club academies to participate.
 - › Associations/clubs should black-out dates that they have availability to host/travel.
 - » Keep Travel to a minimum (if traveling over 1 hour, must schedule at least 2 games)
 - › Associations/clubs should work together to create reciprocal opportunities and should make their best efforts to include all members.
 - › Associations/clubs may charge a participation fee for each team to cover costs of refs, fields, etc.
 - › ASA will help provide oversight to facilitate scheduling to ensure that each Youth Academy Program will obtain the minimum number of matches.

Matching Ability Levels

- Each association/club's Youth Academy Director must be aware of each team/group's ability level(s) to help provide developmentally appropriate match-ups.
 - › It is suggested that the first game of the day has teams made for parity (if clubs have more than one team participating). The second game of the day should have the YADs meet with each other to move players around to match ability levels both within the same team and against a similar level opponent.
 - » Groups/teams will be matched up by Ratings of Teams as determined by each club's ASA Youth Academy Director.
 - A,B,C (it is suggested that you only classify these rankings internally with your association/club and for public scheduling purposes use your own team/group names i.e. MLS teams, arbitrary colors, etc).
 - A = top group
 - B = middle group
 - C = lowest group
 - › Teams may also be classified by birth order (majority of players birthdates) 10 and under born in 2nd half of the year (July-December)

SHOWCASES/TOURNAMENTS

ASA believes that featuring larger events such as the Showcases will feature more than just games and will be a step in the right direction. These events should be a great opportunity for interaction and exchange among all players, parents, coaches, and referees.

ASA Showcase Events

- ASA will host 2 events per season to get large group participation as well as host Coach Education/Parent Education & Interactions. Each association is required to attend these events.
 - › The initial event each season will be used to help determine the internal ratings of players ability levels for all Youth Academy Directors.
 - » There will be no entry fee for the initial Fall 2016 ASA YA Showcase event as ASA will cover all costs.
 - › End of Season Fall/Spring ASA Youth Academy Showcase- costs \$150 per team.

TOURNAMENTS

- ASA hopes to educate membership on the benefits of periodization training, which includes the appropriate number of matches and limiting the number of tournaments since they can often play too many games in too short of time.
 - › Players may attend one tournament outside of their club's hosted tournament per season (therefore, 2 total in the fall and 2 total in the spring). This does not include the ASA Showcases.

GOVERNANCE

The ASA Youth Soccer Academy will be governed by a seven person committee consisting of three Youth Academy Directors, two other members at large, the ASA Executive Director, and the ASA Technical Director, who will serve as the Committee Chair. The members will be selected by the ASA Technical Director. The committee has the ability to accept associations to participate in the program upon determining compliance with these rules. The committee may apply sanctions if an association fails to meet the criteria listed in these guidelines or intentionally violates them. Committee members will have obtained the National Youth Coaching Course and a minimum of the U.S. Soccer "B" License.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS – Flexible Rosters and Pool Player System

Flexible Rosters

Players in the Youth Academy will be registered directly to the player pool with their club instead of being registered to a specific team roster. The Pool Player system eliminates the need for specific team rosters and allows for flexibility in player movement on a weekly basis if the YAD chooses to do so. Players in an Academy Program are rostered to their club for the year and any non-ASA registered player can join a certified Academy Program at any point throughout the year. All Youth Academy Programs must adhere to the registration and player transfer rules and restrictions from their association.

As per USYS Guidelines players are eligible for the ASA Youth Academy

- Registration for an Academy is open to any age eligible (U9 through U10) player from within the club.
- Players may be assigned to teams on a game to game basis.
- Players in match attendance should play a minimum of one half of each match and preferably more.

The Pool Player System

This system is designed to maximize development by allowing players to guest play on a team from the same certified Academy Program. As discussed above, all eligible pool players shall be registered with ASA and also registered to their club's Youth Academy Program. Guidelines for the Pool Player format are as follows:

- All players present must have a current player card in order to play or the team managers must possess all player cards.
- All players present must be indicated on the game card provided to the officials at the beginning of each match or at halftime and have their player card reviewed by the officials.
- Under no circumstances may a guest player be used that is not properly registered with ASA

The purpose of allowing player movement on game day is to create a game environment that best suits the needs of the players. This might change from game to game or from weekend to weekend depending on the circumstances. For example, player movement can occur to due to the following reasons:

- Lop sided match
- Not enough players arriving at the game
- A player from the same club can be added/substituted from a game to create parity in the match
- Providing an opportunity for player to play up
- To remove/add a player to play numbers up or down to create parity

Administrative Recommendations

Based on the YAD and/or coach's observations of players in training and games, it is recommended that individual players be assigned to a team on a game by game basis. Coaches must be proactive in communicating these expectations at the beginning of each season with all parents and also notify players and families which team their child will be playing with early each week to allow parents to best prepare their schedules.

Communication with parents is of utmost importance in the Youth Academy Pool Player format. Additionally, scheduling games at the same times each week and grouping games of all age group teams at the same times/locations will allow for greater ease in communicating player movement on a weekly basis. (e.g. u10 games are always played between 8-12pm on Saturday mornings). This allows families to block off times on their schedule in advance for all possible game times.

Roster(s)

Players will be required to have their name written on the game roster for each match. Players can be added to the game roster either before the start of the match or at halftime (not during the half) and must be properly checked in by the officials. Players must have a Player Card to show the officials at every game they participate in. Either the team managers can handle maintaining each player's card or the player themselves can bring this card with them. It is up to the club to determine which method best suits their Youth Academy Program. A player will not be permitted to play with a team without presenting a player card and being listed on the roster.

It is recommended that Youth Academy players may play a minimum of one (1) game per day and a maximum of two (2) games per day (i.e. four (4) games per weekend). It is up to each Youth Academy Program's Director to determine how to best regulate the amount of games a player participates in during the weekend. Programs should take careful considerations in their roster organization each weekend to ensure they do not abuse the flexibility of the player pool system. Academy Programs must not move players between teams for the purpose of gaining certain game results by keeping stronger players around for all games in a weekend or having players exceed the recommended number of games per day. This violates the purpose of the pool player system and Youth Academy Programs found in violation of this rule risk being removed from the ASA Youth Academy

Youth Academy players must play at least 50 percent of each match they attend. Better yet would be to have a roster size that allows each youngster to play more than half of each match. They should not play a season longer than four months, and must have at least one full month off between seasons of play where they can perform other athletic activities.

MISC. /LONG TERM PROJECTS /FUTURE PLANS

- Videos on YouTube for coaching; parenting; etc.
- Academy Director/Coach Meetings to discuss issues, curriculum, match-ups, etc.
- Referee inclusion
- Monthly "chats" with YADs, Academy coaches and/or Committee – Google + hangouts; Go to meeting, etc.
- Annual Technical Report from each club that includes recaps and data log on trainings/matches
- Reducing number of matches/tournaments

LEARN TO TRAIN PHASE

The Growth Spurt

The Learn to Train stage ends when the growth spurt begins. The growth spurt disrupts coordination and motor control, making it more difficult to pick up and develop new sport skills.

Specialization

It is still too early for specialization in late specialization sports, although many children at this age may have developed a preference for one sport. To maximize the long-term development of their athletic capacities, they need to engage in a broad range of activities, playing at least 2-3 different sports through the year.

Training more than Competing

While most children naturally enjoy healthy competition, skills training and practice should be the focus at Learn to Train – not match outcome. Seventy percent of time in the sport should be spent in practice, and no more than 30% of time spent competing in formal games and competitions. (Competitive training activities count as part of the 70% training time.)

Focus on learning skills

This is the time to develop and refine all fundamental movement skills and learn overall sport skills. The brain is approaching adult size and complexity, and refined skill performance is easier to develop.

Advantage of late developers

Late developers (those who enter puberty later than their peers) have an advantage when it comes to learning skills, as the Learn to

Train stage lasts longer for them. They can often become better sport performers in the long term because of the longer period of skill development that they enjoy.

Disadvantage of late developers

Still, early bloomers often get selected over late bloomers because of the emphasis that coaches and parents often put on competition outcomes at the youth level. It is important that soccer clubs provide late bloomers with an equal opportunity to train and develop within the sport of soccer, so that they do not get overlooked or excluded in the development of the larger pool of future athlete talent.

Advantage of early bloomers

Early developers (those who enter puberty sooner than their peers) have an advantage when it comes to exhibiting some skills including both physical and cognitive skills. For those that develop earlier in the physical aspect, they can be utilized as a model/demonstration player for exhibiting certain skills/movements to their peers. Players that develop early in the cognitive skills categories may exhibit superior problem solving and abstract thinking skills.

Disadvantage of early bloomers

For coaches, there is often the temptation to structure a team around an early bloomer. This preparation is geared to winning in the short-term, not long-term development because they rely on the player's superior speed or athleticism to win games; the proper fundamental movement skills and sport skills are not taught properly. I.e. a player may be fast, but has not been taught the proper running form therefore limiting the true potential for pure speed. Furthermore, early bloomers that are involved in different sports could potentially be "recruited" to specialize too early in an attempt to focus on outcome over the process.

Variety of sports and physical activities

By this stage, children have developed clear ideas about the sports they like. Their enthusiasm and personal sense of success should be encouraged. The focus should be on playing at least 2-3 sports in different seasons through the year. Children should not focus only on one sport for an entire year.

Training flexibility, stamina and strength

This is an important time to work on flexibility. Stamina and strength should be developed through games, relays, and own-body weight exercises as opposed to more formalized physical training.

FAQ

What are Academies?

An Academy is when a club/association keeps a collection of players within age group(s) as opposed to placing them on teams. Some Academies do not "cut" or tryout younger players and all children that want to play can participate. Clubs will have the option, however, to select but the no-cut policy is recommended. The Academy is an idea that is being used in many areas of the country and around the world. In an Academy, the players will stay in "pools" so that they can be moved within different groups of players according to each individual's progress and development through the seasonal year. The emphasis is on developing players and having FUN!

Do clubs/associations have to participate in the Academy?

No. Each club has to make the best decision for their members. There is no ASA sanctioned state league at the U9-U10 age groups. There are other league options that are available and run through outside member associations such as CASL, EASL, and others. The ASA Youth Academy is based on an application and the applicant must meet the YA standards or can be removed.

Will clubs submit players as teams?

No. Club will submit all of the U9/U10 players individually which will entered as a "pool" of players to ASA via GotSoccer. See ASA Registrar Martha Disko for help on registration.

Will the Academy players need Player Cards? What about rosters?

Yes. For matches during Academy playdates (as set by each club), each player will need their YA Player Card for each match. Rosters can be printed or hand written. For all other information, see the Registration/Rostering section of the ASA YA Manual. When attending tournaments, be sure to check their official rules for rosters/cards.

How will an Academy play date look?

The various YA member will set-up playdates with each other based on their own schedule (3-5 dates). This should provide optimum

flexibility for field, coach, ref, player availability. Each club will have a Youth Academy Director (YAD) that will submit to the host how many teams that they will have for each play date. The YAD will split their players into pools of groups of 7-10 players. For the first game, the coaching staff for each club is to randomly balance their groups, if they have more than one.

After the first game or before the second game, the clubs can then bring all of the players together to work on various skills and techniques for 30 minutes. For the second game of the day, if the clubs wish, they may group the players by abilities. They should inform the other YADs that they are doing this so that everyone is on the same page.

Clubs are encouraged to only set-up Academy play dates on Saturdays. The idea is to not have weekday games so that each club can focus on the periodization of training. It is also suggested that clubs attend a playdate only every other weekend.

How will referees be paid?

It is up to each hosting club to pay the referees. ASA suggests having one center official and using parents as volunteer ARs. These games should be good practice for younger referees learning their craft.

Do clubs have to keep all players that show interest?

ASA suggests that clubs have a “no-cut policy” but clubs can determine their own method of how they form their pools. One of the reasons for this is to provide clubs the opportunity to build a bigger base of players for the future. Furthermore, some players that are selected out via a tryout process/roster limitations may develop in the future and a larger pool will help to mix/match players of multiple ability levels.

Can U9s plays with/against U10s?

Yes. It is suggested to find appropriate match-ups with other Academy members. This may mean switching age groups.

Are U10s going to be allowed to play up as a team in the U11 State League?

No. The State Technical Committee has agreed that all clubs should participate in the YA and pool format.

What is the long-term plan?

ASA would like to see the YA grow to U9-U11 for the 2017-2018 season year, and from U9-U12 for the 2018-2019 season year. However, an analysis will be performed at the end of each season to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and modify, if needed, the long-term plan.

Can clubs participate in tournaments?

Yes. In addition to the two ASA hosted events per season, clubs may participate in one additional tournament outside of a club hosted tournament. It is suggested that players in this age do not play more than 4 games in one weekend.