



**LONDON - ST. THOMAS CROATIA SOCCER CLUB**

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# **Technical Development Plan**

Revised: January 21, 2020



## **Technical Development Plan**

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# LONDON - ST. THOMAS CROATIA SOCCER CLUB

## Introduction

The philosophy of the London-St. Thomas Croatia Soccer Club (LS Croatia SC) Technical Development Plan is based on the guidelines set by Canada Soccer and Ontario Soccer Long term Player Development (LTPD).

LTPD was established to give players an optimal soccer experience at every stage by putting their needs front and centre. LTPD gives all players the best chance of success in soccer by tailoring training, competition and coaching to their needs at the appropriate stage of development. When children learn the right skills at the right time supported by a caring soccer community of parents, coaches, officials and volunteers they become more confident in their abilities and have a lot more fun.

LS Croatia SC is a non – profit volunteer organization that is dedicated to offering youth in the London and St- Thomas area a positive fun soccer environment at the competitive level. LS Croatia SC coaches are dedicated to the players and their development while at the same time promoting sportsmanship and fellowship among all its members.

The Development pathway for the player, coach and match officials are all aligned. These pathways are important to LS Croatia SC player development. Without strong consideration to the ongoing education for coaches and match official development, the player will not develop to their full potential.

This Technical plan illustrated a pathway for our players, our coaches and our match officials to follow. All club members will be able to see how the Technical Development Plan will bring out the best in players, coaches and the match officials without forgetting the passion and love of the soccer game.

Sports Science is included as an important aspect for the club and the well-being of the players.

### Guiding Principles

#### 1. *Soccer for Life*

Our first and most important principle is to provide a fun environment which allows each player with a passion and the tool to play soccer for a lifetime.

#### 2. *Player Centered*

Development of the individual is the primary goal. Winning matches, tournament and other team accolades is nice but tactical, reactive results based approach at the younger ages creates an environment of anxiety and fear hindering personal developmental. Player advancement should be used as the measurable over the trophies and results.



3. *Coach Development*

Providing an environment where coaches are given the opportunity to learn, develop and achieve certification is crucial for them as individuals and more importantly to the development of the player.

4. *Match Official Development and Support*

Encouraging young people and taking the time to properly educate our young players to make a decision to be a match official. Not only will they see the opportunity for gain but just as importantly the by product is a better game environment for the Community.

5. *Inclusion*

The focus is creating appropriate environments for each player to grow into whatever level of player they desire. This will provide an opportunity for every player to succeed rather than focusing on the stronger players. This will prevent players from leaving the game.



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## Player Development Pathway

The London - St. Thomas Croatia Soccer Club (LS Croatia SC) is pleased to be a member of the Elgin Middlesex District Soccer League (EMDSL), the Western Regional Soccer League (WRSL), the Western Ontario Soccer League (WOSL) and the Middlesex Masters Soccer League (MMSL).

The London - St. Thomas Croatia Soccer Club provides developmental and competitive programs for boys and girls from the ages of U8 through to U18. In addition, LS Croatia SC provides Men's competitive and Masters teams as a pathway for our players to continue playing the beautiful game.

The 2020 Season will offer youth soccer programs for both boys and girls with 10 teams participating in the Elgin Middlesex District Soccer League (EMDSL), 1 team participating in the Western Region Soccer League (WRSL), 2 teams in the Western Ontario Soccer League (WOSL) and 1 team in the Middlesex Masters Soccer League (MMSL).

LS Croatia SC is committed to develop our programs to align and support the Canada Soccer Association's Long Term Player Development (LTPD) framework.



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## Stage 1: Fundamentals – (females 8, males 8-9)

### Aim

- **Learn all fundamental movement skills using a well structured, positive and fun approach.**

### Technical

- **Introduction to basic soccer skills with a ball** : receiving, passing, ball striking, 1 v 1 skills (fakes and feints), running with the ball, dribbling, turning.

### Tactical

- **Implement basic attack and defense principles.** 1 v 1: change of pace, change of direction, 2 v 1: recognition of overload, spatial awareness, support play, transitions.

### Physical

- **General overall development and mobility.**  
• Running, jumping, throwing, balance, and speed. (A, B, C's) Agility, Balance, Coordination

### Mental

- **Positive attitude to sport.** Confidence, concentration and enjoyment of the game.  
**Social/Emotional:** Promotion of positive attitude and self discipline.

LS Croatia SC *Fundamentals* allows players to develop their ABC's-agility, balance and coordination and speed while they learn the basics of the game. **FUN** is emphasized as well as cooperation and providing more opportunities to maximize time on the ball ('more touches').

LS Croatia SC centralizes all programming in the Fundamentals category to one location as this allows LS Croatia SC technical staff to oversee the impact of training on all participants.

There are two (2) options available with the Fundamentals:

1. Winter Indoor Basic Skill Training
2. Summer League Games and Skill Training

*Winter Indoor Basic Skill Training* provides a FUN hour, once a week from (November to end of April). Training is scheduled weekly from 6:30pm-7:30pm at the BMO Indoor Soccer Facility (Turf Fields).

*Summer League Games and Skill Training* provides a FUN game experience in line with Ontario Soccer Matrices. Participants are grouped together in roster sizes (8-10) compliant with the Matrices and are led by a volunteer qualified Coach. Players will participate in one game a week in the Elgin Middlesex Soccer League in the summer. Teams train twice a week for one hour sessions. The location and time is to be determined based on city field availability. The role of the Coach is to enable children to have a fun and rewarding experience while competing in small sided games (5 x 5), ensure player safety and implement simplified rules while keeping the game moving (limiting interruption to play).



## Stage 2: Learn to Train – (females 8-11, males 9-12)

### Aim

- *Learn all fundamental sports skills.*

### Technical

- *Soccer specific skills* of dribbling, shooting, passing and controlling.
- Combination of skills in game related activities. Ball Mastery on all surfaces.

### Tactical

- *Play modified and small sided games:* 1 v 1 up to 9 v 9: change of pace/direction, 2 v 1: Better understanding to positional awareness.

### Physical

- *Continue to develop ABC's* - Agility, Balance and Coordination.
- *Develop* speed, power and endurance through fun games.

### Mental

- Understanding the role of practice.
- *Social/Emotional:* Perseverance, confidence and concentration.

LS Croatia SC understands this a critical stage in player development, when children become less self-centered and are more able to reflect on their actions and learn from mistakes providing an optimal window for further development of skills. The focus is learning by doing, building a larger repertoire of soccer movements and teaching the basic principles of play in a fun and challenging environment.

LS Croatia SC centralizes all programming in the **Learn to Train** category to one location as this allows LS Croatia SC technical staff to oversee the impact of training on all participants.

There are two (2) options available with the Learn to Train:

1. Winter Indoor Skill Training and Indoor League Games
2. Summer League Games and Skill Training

*Winter Indoor* provides an hour, twice a week from (November to end of April). Training is scheduled weekly from 7:30pm-8:30pm at the BMO Indoor Soccer Facility (Turf Fields) and Saturdays 11:00am-12:00pm at White Oaks P.S.

U9-U12 female/male players will participate in the Elgin Middlesex District Indoor Soccer League (EMDSL) or the EMSA Futsal League and will play one game every Sunday (October to March).

*Summer League Games and Skill Training* provides an enjoyable game experience in line with Ontario Soccer Matrices. Participants are grouped together in roster sizes (10-12 U9/U10 and 14-16 U11/U12) compliant with the matrices and are led by a qualified Coach. Players will participate in one game a week in the Elgin Middlesex Soccer League in the



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summer. Games are based on the LTPD Matrices (7 v 7 U9/U10 and 9 v 9 U11/12).

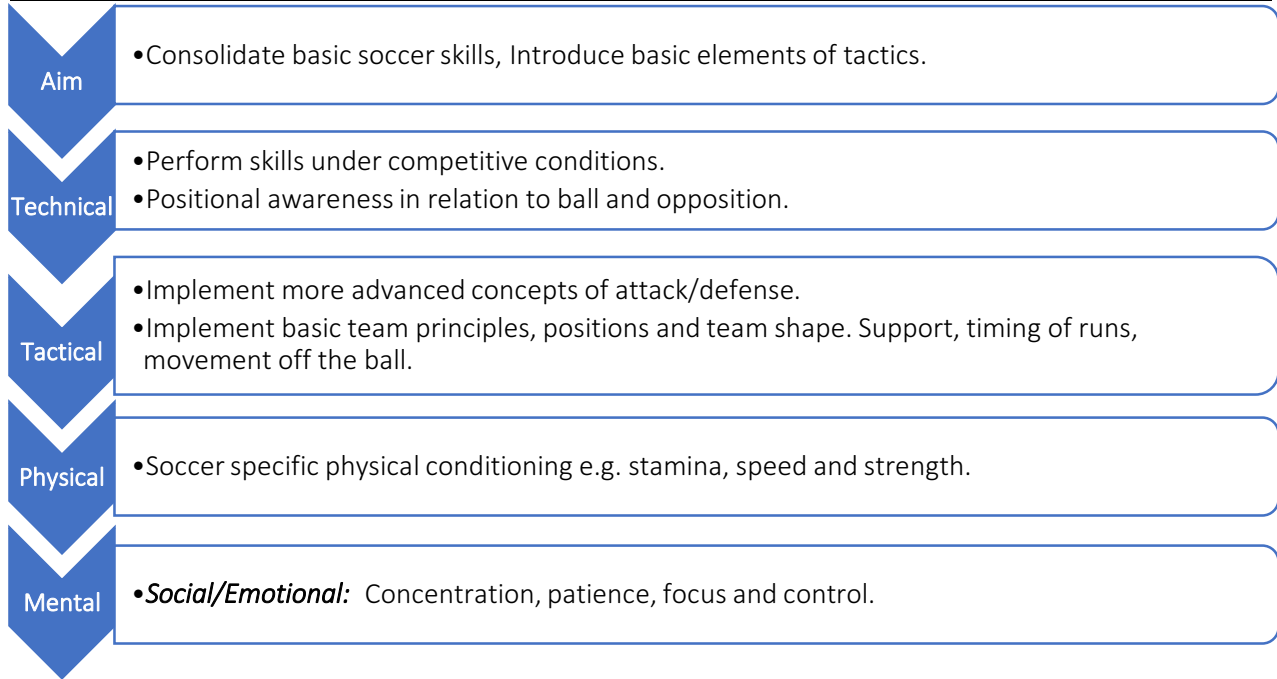
Teams train twice a week for 1.5 hour sessions (May to September). The location and time is to be determined based on city field availability.

Training sessions are facilitated by the Head Coach with the assistance of the Technical Lead and volunteers.



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## Stage 3: Training to Train – (females 11-15, males 12-16)



As children move into adolescence, official league standings are introduced and the game becomes more competitive, with more emphasis on strategy and tactics. LS Croatia SC compete at a district or regional level.

There are two (2) options available with the Training to Train stage:

1. Winter Indoor Skill Training and Indoor League Games
2. Summer League Games and Skill Training

*Winter Indoor* provides an hour, twice a week from (November to end of April). Training is scheduled weekly from 8:30pm-9:30pm at the BMO Indoor Soccer Facility (Turf Fields) and Saturdays 12:00pm-1:00pm at White Oaks P.S.

Female/male players will participate in the Elgin Middlesex District Indoor Soccer League (EMDSL) or the EMSA Futsal League and will play one game every Sunday (October to March).

*Summer League Games and Skill Training* provides a competitive game experience in line with Canada Soccer and Ontario Soccer regulations. Participants are grouped together in roster sizes (15-18) and are led by a qualified Coach. Players will participate in one game a week in the Elgin Middlesex Soccer League or the Western Regional Soccer League in the summer. Game formation is 11 v 11.

Teams train twice a week for 1.5 hour sessions (May to September). The location and time is to be determined based on city field availability.

Training sessions are facilitated by the Head Coach with the assistance of the Technical Lead and volunteers.



## Stage 4: Training to Compete – (females 15-19, males 16-20)

### Aim

- Players work to gain more game maturity as they learn to perform these skills under a variety of competitive conditions.

### Technical

- Refinement of core skills and position specific skills; continued development of advanced techniques and skills.

### Tactical

- Decision-making tactical awareness, game analysis, productivity and competitive proficiency.

### Physical

- Further develop flexibility, agility, aerobic and anaerobic endurance, strength and stability.

### Mental

- Increased player concentration, responsibility, discipline, accountability, goal setting.
- **Social/Emotional:** self motivating and will to win. Mental toughness, competitive mentality in practice and games.

LS Croatia SC teams at this stage compete at a district or regional level.

There are two (2) options available with the Training to Train stage:

1. Winter Indoor Skill Training and Indoor League Games
2. Summer League Games and Skill Training

*Winter Indoor* provides an hour, twice a week from (November to end of April). Training is scheduled weekly from 8:30pm-9:30pm at the BMO Indoor Soccer Facility (Turf Fields) and Saturdays 1:00pm-2:00pm at White Oaks P.S.

Female/male players will participate in the Elgin Middlesex District Indoor Soccer League (EMDSL) or the EMSA Futsal League and will play one game every Sunday (October to March).

*Summer League Games and Skill Training* provides a competitive game experience in line with Canada Soccer and Ontario Soccer regulations. Participants are grouped together in roster sizes (15-18) and are led by a qualified Coach. Players will participate in one game a week in the Elgin Middlesex Soccer League or the Western Regional Soccer League in the summer. Game formation is 11 v 11.

Teams train twice a week for 1.5 hour sessions (May to September). The location and time is to be determined based on city field availability.

Training sessions are facilitated by the Head Coach with the assistance of the Technical Lead and volunteers.



## Stage 5: Training to Win – (females 19+, males 20+)

### Aim

- The focus of training has shifted to optimization of performance and maximization of all capacities.

### Technical

- Further development of advanced techniques and skills. Refinement individual positional skills; game-related technical repetition under pressure.

### Tactical

- High degree of decision making and game analysis skills; ability to adjust game plan and adapt playing strategies to suit changing demands.

### Physical

- Individual fitness program for maintenance. Periodization is critical.

### Mental

- Increased concentration and responsibility, leadership, discipline, accountability
- **Social/Emotional:** self confidence, self motivation, will to win, mental toughness and competitive mentality.

LS Croatia SC compete at a district or regional level.

There are two (2) options available with the Training to Train stage:

1. Winter Indoor League Games
2. Summer League Games and Skill Training

*Winter Indoor League:* As an adult team in this stage of a player's pathway, the BMO Indoor Soccer League provides a recreational program for teams to play in the winter.

*Summer League Games and Skill Training* provides a competitive game experience in line with Canada Soccer and Ontario Soccer regulations. Participants are grouped together in roster sizes (15-18) and are led by a qualified Coach. Players will participate in Western Ontario Soccer League (WOSL). Game formation is 11 v 11.

Teams train twice a week for 1.5 hour sessions (May to September). The location and time is to be determined based on city field availability.

Training sessions are facilitated by the Head Coach with the assistance of the Technical Lead and volunteers.

### Goalie Training

One of the most demanding positions in the game; goalkeepers require technical skill, focus, strength, athleticism, and determination in order to succeed at a competitive level. Not only do they need specific GK skills, but ball mastery skills to support the backline comfortably. For all LS Croatia SC goalkeepers, the Club will continue to offer goalkeeper specific training to improve the individual tasks goalkeepers face in a game scenario.



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All goalkeepers will improve in the following areas:

- Technical Components
- Strength Building
- Tactical Awareness
- Goalkeeper Mindset

The Goalkeeper program will be overseen by the Club's Certified Goalkeeper Coach and Assistant Goalkeeper Trainers will also be participating in clinics.

Training Clinics (offered free of charge to Club Goalkeepers and for a fee for partner clubs):

- JR Goalkeepers (U12 and younger): In the winter (October to end of April), every Wednesday at the BMO Indoor Soccer Fields from 6:30pm – 8:30pm (staggered ages). In the summer (May to September), location and time to be determined based on city field availability.
- SR Goalkeepers (U13-U18): In the winter (October to end of April), every Wednesday at the BMO Indoor Soccer Fields from 8:30pm – 9:30pm. In the summer (May to September), location and time to be determined based on city field availability.

## **Futsal Program**

According to Ontario soccer, there are proven benefits to playing futsal for the technical skill development of young players, with particular emphasis on the skills of passing, dribbling and close control. It is widely viewed as the ideal skill building environment for producing technically excellent football players.

In the London and surrounding areas, the Elgin Middlesex Soccer Association (EMSA) offers a Futsal League in the winter, games to be scheduled on Sundays. Unfortunately, the league games are scheduled on the same day as the Elgin Middlesex Indoor Soccer League. While LS Croatia SC cannot mandate that our teams participate in the local futsal league due to these scheduling conflicts, players and coaches are encouraged to review the options of both leagues for registration in the winter.

The Club is committed to providing appropriate futsal training throughout the year, including but not limited to monthly in-house games on local futsal courts (January to end of April). Included in the Club's *Strategic and Operational Plan (2020-2025)*, the Board has created action plans to promote futsal programming. This includes budgeting for coaches to attend the FIFA Futsal Instructor Course when offered and standardizing futsal training drills and practice sessions for stages in the Player Pathway.

## **Soccer for Life- Adult Program**

In addition to the above stages, London-St. Thomas Croatia Soccer Club offers a Master's men's program- Senior Reserve Team (for players over the age of 35). They play games only in the summer in Middlesex Masters Soccer League (MMSL). Currently the club does not have an adult women's team; however, would like to offer programming in the future and has been included in the LS Croatia SC *Strategic and Operational Plan for (2020-2025)*.

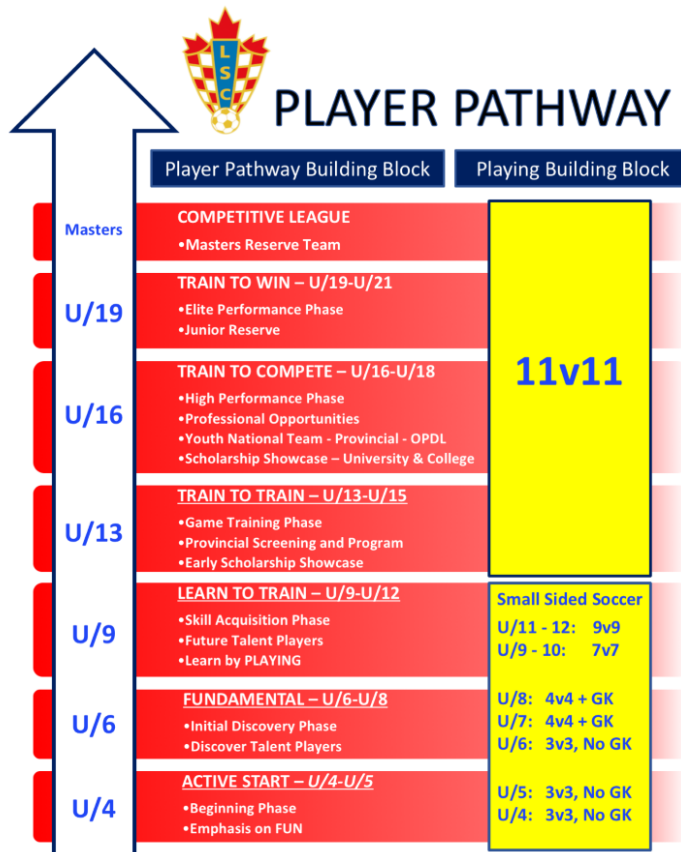


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## The Talented Pathway



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The “Talented Pathway” was created to provide opportunities for talented players in the province to develop and advance. The basis for the program is the Ontario Player Development League launched in 2014 at the U13 level.

LS Croatia SC is committed to identifying and developing players capable of competing at the highest levels of Canadian and International soccer. As a member of Ontario Soccer, we want our Club’s top players to participate in the Ontario Soccer High Performance Program and **Talent on Locations Days** (TOLD) in line with the Ontario Player Development League.



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LS Croatia SC teams frequently compete in college showcases and international tournaments, which also serve as excellent tools for both player development and elite talent identification.

Furthermore, LS Croatia SC is forging relationships with international soccer clubs with the intention of both developing and showcasing the skills of our most talented athletes on the international stage.

## Coach Development Pathway

LS Croatia SC is focused on implementing a player development philosophy in line with Canada Soccer's Long Term Player Development (LTPD) model. In order to successfully implement and consistently uphold such a standard, LS Croatia SC understands that recruiting, developing, educating, and retaining coaches is essential.

With player development and education at the heart of our Club principles, it is of the utmost importance to create a 'family' coaching support to guide our players through their Long Term Player Development plan.

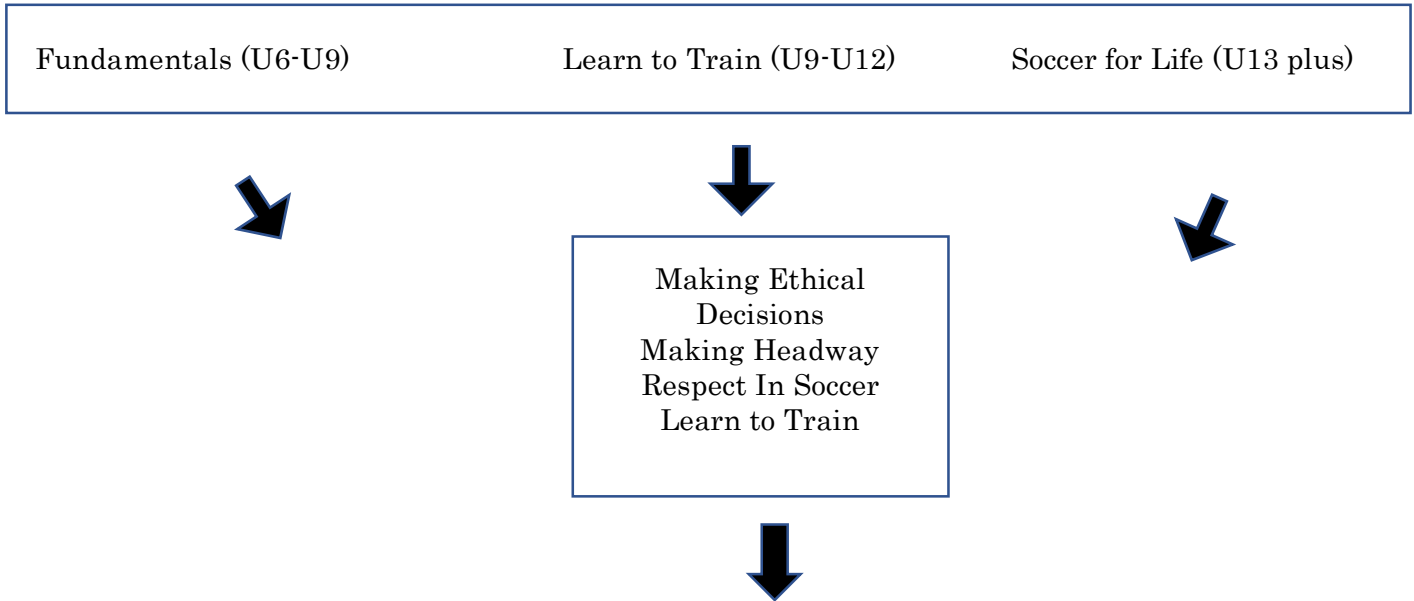
### Education and Certifications

- The board members of LS Croatia SC will provide all necessary information to complete the required coaching certification, this will allow our players to receive high standards of coaching.
- In conjunction with Canada Soccer Association, LS Croatia SC has a certification pathway in place.



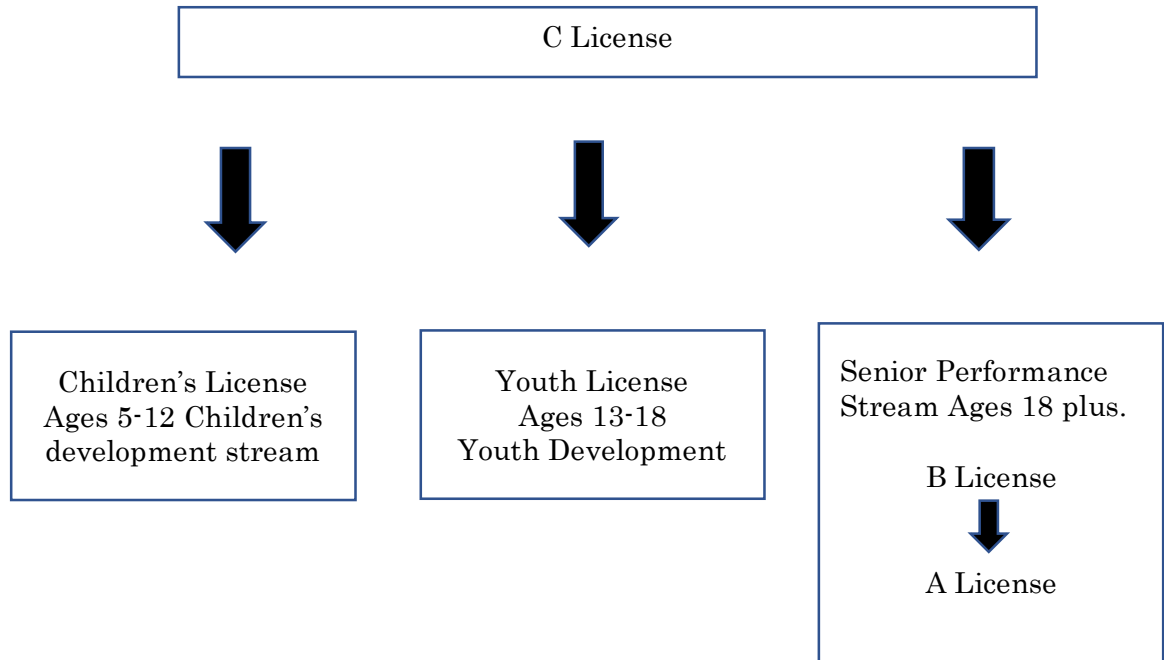
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## The Community Coach Stream



## The Licensing Coach Stream

LS Croatia SC encourages and strives to have all coaches achieve their C License regardless of the age group they are coaching. LS Croatia has a pathway that aligns with OSA in place for the coaches to continue to receive certification.





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- The Technical Lead will provide clear guidelines in the player pathway and onsite training support to train the LS Croatia SC, elite players and guide coaches to play, teach, and learn soccer in a stimulating and fun environment. The ultimate aim is to provide each coach with a Coaches Manual that will aid in the guidance of players on their journey through LTPD.
- LS Croatia SC has a web-based coaches' resources in place to provide support tools and developmental information.
- LS Croatia SC is team oriented and all coaches have the ability to communicate with other coaches to assist in training and/or strategies in delivering an organized program.
- Coaches are encouraged to continue their education and development by attending coaching courses. LS Croatia SC pays for and facilitates coaching development upon approval from the Board, who maintains a budget for each coach development. The goal is for the Board to provide 8-10 hours of in-house coach education and instruction per year.
- Coaches' Meetings are scheduled throughout the year and are Mandatory.

## TECHNICAL STRUCTURE

LS Croatia SC is committed to provide players a safe, fun environment for continued growth and development. Many individuals play a role in producing, implementing and re-evaluating the Club's technical plan and overall mission. Below are the Technical Staff and members that are staffed at LS Croatia SC:

### **Technical Director (Lead):**

The Technical Director is a senior leadership position. The Technical Director reports directly to the Board. It is not primarily an on-field coaching role, although there is a coaching component to provide coaching leadership to all volunteer and technical staff within the Competitive environment. The role of the Technical Director is to implement and provide staff for all the Technical program administered by the club.

### **Staff Coach:**

Staff Coaches report to the Technical Director. Each staff coach has at least the minimum qualifications and certifications to coach as mandated by Ontario Soccer. As indicated in the Club's Strategic and Operational Plan (2019-2024), the Club's strategic target is to increase the number of certified C Licensed and Provincial B Licensed coaches.



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## **Junior Staff Coach:**

Junior Staff Coaches are Staff coaches **who** are young, energetic current or recent youth soccer players who have been identified as having the skills necessary to move into a coaching capacity. Junior Staff coaches are utilized in programs such as Fundamentals and Learn to Train.

## **Goalkeeper Coach:**

The Goalkeeper Coach has completed the Ontario Soccer Goalkeeper Coach Diploma. The role of the Goalkeeper Coach is to implement and provide training for all Club goalies and offer extra training to partnered clubs.



## Match Official Development Pathway

The Match Officials Development Pathway creates a process undertaken by LS Croatia SC to enhance and promote the development of match officials in our community and in accordance with the Long-Term Officials Development (LTOD) plan of Ontario Soccer.

LS Croatia SC currently does not staff match officials as the club utilizes league assigned match officials for games and the club does not currently run a house league program. However, LS Croatia SC recognizes that a key element of soccer development is that of a Match Official Pathway to development. Soccer cannot be played in a structured fashion without officials and the Club recognizes that it is in the best interest of the sport to ensure that the development of this important stakeholder group is focused on heavily.

LS Croatia SC is committed to the following objectives in support of match official development as per the Club's *Strategic and Operational Plan (2019-2024)*:

- Plan a budget that highlights development fees to be contributed to match officials programming.
- Creation of an Annual Education and Training Plan for match officials in collaboration with a Club Head Referee (CHR).
- Partner with other clubs in the District that have house league programs and develop a joint mentorship initiative. This is to ensure that prospective match officials will be paired up with senior match officials and have the opportunity to attend education sessions in-house with recreational programs.
- Develop a recruitment plan that targets a variety of ages with balance of male and female (50/50). The plan will include recruiting players from the Club's Competitive Program (must be 14 years old as per January 1<sup>st</sup> of current year).
- Offer weekend training by encouraging players to attend the *Laws of the Game* seminars (3 per year) hosted by the Club Head Referee.
- Offer one Small-Sided and One Entry Level match official course each year (more if the demand necessitates) in conjunction with the local District. Each clinic should have a minimum of two female match officials.
- Offer match official fitness sessions for males and females (one-hour per month on 1/2 of an indoor field from November through April). This would incorporate the Ontario Soccer LTOD Fitness Training Program.
- Club will be familiar with District Education classes when and where offered to encourage player attendance. Classes and dates will be added to the Club web and advertised on social media.
- Club will commit to enhance the ratio of women as match officials by customizing clinics and fitness sessions that target women.



## Sport Science

All L.S. Croatia SC staff, volunteers and coaches accept a major responsibility for the care and safety of our players. Although the athletes and parents share in the responsibility for player protection and safety, it is the club's responsibility to help them practice and play as safely as possible.

All policies and protocols surrounding a player's **physical, mental and social/emotional development** will be reviewed with LS Croatia SC staff, volunteers and coaches prior to the winter and summer seasons. Educational resources for coaches and families will be posted and updated on the club webpage [www.croatiafc.com](http://www.croatiafc.com) annually. All forms and policies will be available on the webpage for easy access.

### Nutrition Seminars

Nutrition Seminars are facilitated twice a year (during the summer and winter seasons) to all players and their parents. It is imperative that players learn how to properly fuel and hydrate their bodies for peak performance in a competitive environment. Nutrition seminars are led by team managers in consultation with a registered dietician specializing in youth health and development.

### Sport Psychology Sessions

Applying mental strategies in sport is sometimes forgotten but is becoming more important for elite athletes looking to gain an edge on the competition and maintain individual focus and confidence. In the London area, LS Croatia SC is fortunate to have access to Natascha Wesch ([www.elitemindperformance.com](http://www.elitemindperformance.com)), who is a Mental Performance Consultant registered with the Canadian Sport Psychology Association (CSPA). Natascha specializes in Mental Performance Training and Consulting and works with players, officials and coaches of all ages.

Natascha Wesch's services include *individual or team consulting*. Individual consulting is for the player ready to take control of his or her mental game. Team consulting for teams is pro-active and preventative and is tailored to the team's specific needs and goals.

At the beginning of each season (winter and summer), coaches, managers and families are provided with referral information to Natascha Wesch's services.

As indicated in the LS Croatia SC Operational and Strategic Plan (2020-2025), the club is committed to take a step further and offer yearly seminars to players/families with Natascha Wesch.

#### ***Seminar topics could include:***

- Seeing is Believing: Using Imagery in Sport
- The Mental Game Plan: Goal-Setting
- Managing Competitive Stress



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## **Strength, Endurance and Agility Training Programs**

The game of soccer is incredibly demanding. A player must be able to sprint, explode to the ball and change direction and maintain these skills for a long duration. So, to improve a player's game on the pitch, one must develop overall athleticism, including strength, speed, power and endurance.

LS Croatia SC players have the opportunity to participate in weekly training sessions from October through April. Coaches have the opportunity to work with the Club's Community Partner, Talbot Trail Physiotherapy who have qualified fitness trainers and physiotherapy staff, who can work with athletes to develop a program to improve player strength, endurance and agility.

## **Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation**

All injured players are referred to our Community Partners Talbot Trail Physiotherapy or Fowler Kennedy Sport Medicine Clinic, based on the severity of the injury. With parent approval (written consent), clinic staff are asked to disclose information to the coaching staff in order to develop an appropriate Return to Play Plan.