



PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

FOR PLAYERS U7 TO U14

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INTRODUCTION

The following player development curriculum is intended to create a structured system for teaching children how to play the “beautiful game” of soccer. This curriculum will provide the coaches of U7-U14 teams (boys or girls) with a list of technical and tactical objectives to work on with their players each year.

There are two philosophical concepts that make using this curriculum so important to player development. *First concept:* In terms of development, practices are more important than games. Children practice so they can develop as soccer players. Games are played for fun and serve as a test to see how much the players have learned in practice. This curriculum will give each coach a clear set of technical and tactical objectives to teach during practices and to evaluate during games. *Second concept:* The process for developing youth soccer players takes time and patience. This curriculum creates a timeline to gradually teach every technical skill, and tactical concept, appropriate for a U14 player, over the course of 8 years. It is designed to give players ample time to explore new technical and tactical objectives before they progress to more complex training topics.

The difficulty with any curriculum, is that individuals learn and develop at different rates. One rigid curriculum will not be appropriate for every team. Training at the appropriate developmental level and then gradually progressing each year, is essential for maintaining player motivation and enjoyment. This curriculum is therefore organized into eight training *levels*, rather than by age group. When possible, teams will start at the curriculum level that correlates to their age group (i.e.. Level One for U7/First Grade teams or Level 3 for U9/Third Grade teams). Teams can drop down to a lower curriculum level if they are having difficulty with the technical skills and tactics at the curriculum level associated with their age group. Your Director of Coaching will be able to assist you in finding the most appropriate curriculum level for your team.

This curriculum provides players with new technical and tactical objectives each year. It is not expected that every player will be able to completely master each of the techniques and tactics, for a particular curriculum level, in one year. Ultimately, we’d like to see players demonstrate learned techniques and tactics during games, but this can take time. As players mature, they continue to refine the technical skills and tactics learned in previous years. Players will develop at different rates, but we can expect that each will follow the following progression for learning techniques and tactics: learn during practice -THEN- demonstrate ability during practice -THEN- utilize during games.

Included are sections that explain the technical and tactical terms used in the curriculum. Although the curriculum outlines *when* specific objectives will be taught, it does not cover *how* these teachings should be executed. The design of training sessions is dependent on the individual coach’s preferences and experience level. Coaches with questions about curriculum terminology or practice plans should contact their Director of Coaching for assistance.

CURRICULUM LEVEL 1

UNDER 7



TECHNICAL

Dribbling

- Inside of foot
- Laces
- Sole of the foot

Passing

- Inside of the foot - 5 yards

Receiving

- Inside of the foot - on the ground with a soft first touch

Finishing

- Inside of the foot (1v0 to goal)

TACTICAL

Training Games

- Technical-Functional Training Environment - 1v0
- Scrimmage - 3v3

CURRICULUM LEVEL 2

UNDER 8



TECHNICAL

Dribbling

- Inside of foot
- Laces
- Sole of the foot
- Running with the ball

Passing

- Inside of the foot - 5 yards

Receiving

- Inside of the foot - on the ground with a soft first touch

Finishing

- Inside of the foot (1v0 and 1v1 to goal)

TACTICAL

Training Games

- Technical-Functional Training Environment - 1v1
- Scrimmage - 3v3

CURRICULUM LEVEL 3

UNDER 9



TECHNICAL

Dribbling

- Sole of the Foot
- Running with the ball
- Turning with the inside of the foot

Passing

- Inside of the foot - 10 yards

Receiving

- Inside of the foot - on the ground with a forward first touch

Finishing

- Inside of the foot - 6-8 yards on breakaway vs. GK

TACTICAL

Training Games

- Technical-Functional Training Environment - 1v1
- Scrimmage - 3v3

CURRICULUM LEVEL 4

UNDER 10



TECHNICAL

Dribbling

- Turning with the outside of the foot
- Turning with the sole of the foot
- Changing Speed

Passing

- Inside of the foot - 15 yards

Receiving

- Inside of the foot - on the ground with a lateral first touch
- Out of the air with the laces - soft first touch

Finishing

- Inside of the foot - 8-12 yards

Defending

- Body shape when faced up with attacker
- Poke Tackle

Juggling (Starting from hands)

- Thigh - Single
- Foot - Single

TACTICAL

Defending

- Pressure (Role of the 1st Defender)

Attacking

- Role of the 1st Attacker
- Shape - Width

Training Games

- Technical-Functional Training Environment - 1v1
- Scrimmage - 4v4 (5v5 with GK's)

CURRICULUM LEVEL 5

UNDER 11



TECHNICAL

Dribbling

- Shielding
- Change of Direction and Speed

Passing

- One touch passing, on the ground, with inside of the foot - 10 yards
- Instep - 20 yards

Receiving

- Across the body
- Out of the air with the inside of the foot - lateral first touch

Heading

- Basic Technique

Finishing

- Shooting with the instep - 12-15 yards

Defending

- Body shape when faced up with attacker
- Block Tackle

Juggling (Starting from hands)

- Thigh - Multiple (5 reps)
- Foot - Multiple (5 reps)

TACTICAL

Defending

- Role of the 1st Defender
- Compactness

Attacking

- Role of the 1st Attacker
- Penetration - passing on the ground
- Combination - Wall Pass
- Shape - Height and Depth

Training Games

- Technical-Functional Training Environment - 2v1
- Scrimmage - 4v4 (5v5 with GK's)

CURRICULUM LEVEL 6

UNDER 12



TECHNICAL

Dribbling

- Feints

Passing

- One touch, on the ground, with inside of the foot - 15 yards
- Instep - 25 yards
- Outside of the foot - 10 yards

Receiving

- Across body while turning
- Out of the air with the chest - forward first touch
- Out of the air with the thigh - lateral first touch
- Outside of the foot, on the ground, - forward first touch

Heading

- Basic Technique

Finishing

- Shooting with the instep - 15-20 yards
- One time shot - inside of the foot - 8-12 yards

Defending

- Slide Tackle

Juggling (Starting from hands)

- Thigh - Alternating (10 reps)
- Feet - Alternating (10 reps)

TACTICAL

Defending

- Cover (Role of the 2nd Defender)
- Delay

Attacking

- Roles of the 2nd Attacker
- Possession
- Playing out of the back
- Mobility - Creation of space for teammates
- Combinations - Overlap and Take Over
- Shape - Linking Player
- Flank Play
 - Crossing to the Slot
 - Slot Run to Receive
 - Timing of Runs

Training Games

- Technical-Functional Training Environment - 2v2
- Scrimmage - 4v4 (5v5 with GK's)

CURRICULUM LEVEL 7

UNDER 13



TECHNICAL

Passing

- Outside of the foot - 15 yards
- Instep - 30 yards
- Chipping
- Out of the air with the inside of the foot - 10 yards

Receiving

- Outside of the foot - on the ground with a lateral first touch
- Turning with back to goal

Heading

- Defensive heading

Finishing

- Front Volley
- Side Volley
- Long Range - 18-25 yards

Defending

- Shoulder challenge
- Body positioning to prevent the attacker from turning

Juggling (Starting from the ground)

- Feet - Alternating (25 reps)

TACTICAL

Defending

- Balance (Role of the 3rd Defender)
- Shape
- Recovery Runs
- Transition to Defense

Attacking

- Possession vs. Penetration Decisions
- Changing the Point of Attack
- Combination - Double Pass
- Flank Play
 - Crossing to the Near Post
 - Near Post Runs to Receive
 - Timing of Runs

Training Games

- Technical-Functional Training Environment - 3v2
- Scrimmage - 6v6 (7v7 with GK's)

CURRICULUM LEVEL 8

UNDER 14



TECHNICAL

Passing

- Inside of the foot - bending passes 20-30 yards
- Outside of the foot - 20 yards
- Instep - 30+ yards
- Out of the air with the laces - 30 yards

Receiving

- Turning with back to goal

Heading

- Attacking Heading
- Protecting Oneself

Finishing

- Half Volley
- Bending Shots

Juggling (Starting from the ground)

- Feet - Alternating (50 reps)

TACTICAL

Defending

- Tracking
- Zonal Defending
- High/Low Pressure Defending

Attacking

- Role of the 3rd Attacker
- Penetration - Passing through the Air
- Playing in the final third
- Counter Attack
- Mobility - Creation of Space for Oneself
- Combination - 3 Player Combinations
- Flank Play
 - Crossing to the Far Post
 - Far Post Runs to Receive
 - Timing of Runs
 - Recycling Runs

Training Games

- Technical-Functional Training Environment - 4v3 and 6v4
- Scrimmage - 8v8 (9v9 with GK's)



TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY

DRIBBLING - Controlling the ball on the ground with the feet. When dribbling the knees should be bent for power and agility.

Surfaces of the Foot Used for Dribbling	
Inside of the foot	A slow but controlled dribble. Contact with the ball is being made by the inside of the foot between the arch of the foot and the end of the big toe.
Laces	A faster type of dribble, where the ball is <i>pushed</i> forward allowing the player to race after it. The toe should be pointed down and contact with the ball is made the laces and outside the foot.
Sole of the foot	A form of dribbling where the bottom of the foot is rolled over the top of the ball. Players use the bottom of the foot to move the ball forwards, backwards and sideways.

- **Running/Cruising with the ball** – Dribbling the ball at a fast pace. The laces are used for contact with the ball. The player must be able to lift their head up and see the whole field ahead of them when running with the ball. Dribbling with the laces becomes easier if the player is moving diagonally. Diagonal dribbling allows the attacker to move forward up the field (towards the goal) and across the field (away from defensive pressure) at the same time.
- **Possession Dribbling** – A low risk style of dribbling used to insure that the other team does not regain possession of the ball.
 - **Shielding** – Dribbling while keeping the ball out of the reach of a close defender. The width of the body is turned and kept between the ball and defender. While it is possible to shield the ball from an opponent while staying in one spot, this type of static shielding is only effective in game situations for a few seconds. Players should be encouraged to shield the ball while moving towards open space, turning often to keep the defender off balance and at a safer distance.
 - **Turning with the ball** – Using the various surfaces of the feet to change the direction of the dribble. Players should learn to turn 360 degrees with the ball.



DRIBBLING CONTINUED

Surfaces Used to Turn with the Ball	
Inside of the foot	“Cutting or Chopping” at the ball with the big toe or inside of the foot. The right foot is used to turn left and the left foot is used to turn right. Turning with the inside of the foot can be very abrupt (an instantaneous 180 degree turn) or subtle (as if aching around a circle).
Outside of the foot	“Cutting or Chopping” at the ball with the little toe or outside of the foot. The right foot is used to turn right and the left foot is used to turn left. Turning with the outside of the foot is usually a subtle maneuver (arching around a circle rather than an abrupt 180 degree turn).
Sole of the foot	The bottom of the foot is used to stop and/or change the direction of the dribble up to 180 degrees. This is a quick and deceptive way to change the direction of the dribble but difficult to use a higher rates of speed. This type of turning offers more control to the attacker and is typically used at slower speeds and in smaller spaces.

- **Dribbling to Penetrate** – An aggressive form of dribbling used to create an opportunity to shoot or pass, or to dribble past a defender(s).

Components of Dribbling to Penetrate	
Change Speed	A sudden burst of speed is used to create space between the attacker and the defender
Change Direction	A sudden change in direction is used to create space between the attacker and the defender
Feints/Deception	A single or set of dribbling moves aimed at misdirecting the defender.



PASSING – Transferring the ball to a teammate to either advance the ball forward towards the opponent’s goal or to shift the ball to an area of decreased pressure.

- **Inside of the foot** – Technique used for accurate, midrange passing (0-30 yards).
- **Outside of the foot** – Technique used for quick, deceptive passing at close range (0-20 yards).
- **Instep Drive** – Technique used for long range passing (>30 yards).
- **Chipping** – Technique used for quickly popping the ball up and over opponents at a range of 5 to 20 yards. To chip the ball upward the player must strike the underside of the ball abruptly. Backspin is created because the foot does not “follow-through” the ball. The backspin will limit the distance that a chip will travel and will also keep it from rolling forward after it falls to the ground.
- **One touch passing** – Quick and accurate passing without taking a touch to settle the ball.
- **Passing out of the air** – Transferring the ball out of the air to a teammate. A form of one touch passing.
- **Bending passes** – Curving the ball around defenders or into the running path of a teammate by striking the side of the ball with the inside and outside of the feet.



RECEIVING - Taking control over a moving ball. Players use various body surfaces to make their first touch on the ball to be received.

- **First Touch** - A player's first touch is used to start or continue an attack. It is also used to turn the ball away from defensive pressure so that possession can be maintained. Depending on the situation, players choose to either have a soft first touch to keep the ball close to them or to have a firmer first touch to quickly move the ball out of a particular space.
 - **Soft First Touch** - A first touch that settles the ball at the feet of the attacker. Any body surface used to make a soft first touch must be relaxed and then withdrawn slightly (to absorb the energy out of the ball) as contact with the ball is made.
 - **Forward First Touch** - A firm first touch that starts the ball moving forward a few steps ahead of the attacker.
 - **Lateral First Touch** - A firm first touch that starts the ball moving laterally or diagonally a few steps in front of the attacker.
- **Receiving Across the Body** - When preparing to receive the ball (typically on the ground) the player opens their body angle to the field. The width of the body is maneuvered so that it is in parallel to the trajectory of the incoming ball. This type of positioning is called "sideways-on". The ball is allowed to travel past the near foot, across the length of the body and then received by the inside of the forward foot. Being open to the field and "sideways-on" prior to receiving the ball creates a better opportunity to see the field and also allows for a greater variety of first touch options.
- **Receiving Across the Body while Turning to Shield Off a Defender** - Just as the ball is about to be received across the body the attacker swivels their body around 180 degrees in an attempt to shield the ball from a defender.
- **Receiving to Turn** - Receiving skills used to penetrate with the first touch when an attacker is receiving a ball and has a defender applying pressure from behind. The attacker uses various body spins and/or ball spins to confuse, unbalance or elude the defender and allow for a 180-degree turn with the ball.



HEADING – Striking the ball with any part of the head with the purpose of clearing, passing or scoring.

- **Basic Technique** – The eyes are open and the mouth is closed. The middle of the ball is struck with the middle of the forehead between the brow and top of the forehead.
- **Defensive Heading** – The intent is to clear the ball up and out of the defended space. The player must strike the lower half of the ball to insure an upward trajectory. To increase the power of the strike, players should first bend their knees then jump up and through the ball.
- **Attacking Heading** – The intent is to either pass or to score. In either case the ball should be directed downward. To create a downward trajectory the player must strike the upper half of the ball. To increase the power of the strike, players will snap forward at the waist thus adding the momentum of the upper body through the ball.
- **Protecting Oneself** – To prevent head on head collisions when heading, players should be taught to bend at the elbow and raise their arms up (slightly below shoulder height) just prior to contact with the opponent. The raised arms create a buffer zone of space between the two opponents and lower the chance of a head to head collision. Players must not raise their arms above shoulder level otherwise they risk striking their opponent's head with their arm or elbow.



FINISHING - Striking the ball toward goal with the purpose of scoring. To create a shot with a low trajectory, the plant foot must be beside the ball upon contact and the ball must be struck in the middle or top half. To create a shot with a high trajectory, the plant foot should be slightly behind the ball upon contact and the ball must be struck below the ball's center.

- **Inside of the Foot** – Close range shooting. (1-20 yards depending on the strength of the player) The inside of the foot offers the player the greatest accuracy (height and direction) and room for contact error (the surface area is larger than that of the instep).
- **Instep** – Long range shooting. (18-30 yards depending on the strength of the player) For more powerful, long range shooting players will point their toe and strike the ball with their laces.
- **One Time Shot** - Shooting quickly without taking a touch to settle the ball.
- **Bending Shots** – Striking the ball to the right or left of center will cause the ball to spin and therefore achieve a bent trajectory. The inside of the foot offers the greatest potential for spin because of the increased size of the contact area.
- **Volley** – Striking the ball out of the air with the intent to score.

Types of Volleys	
Front Volley	The ball is falling in front of the attacker and is struck with the instep or inside of the foot.
Side Volley	The ball is falling to the side of the attacker and the leg is swung up and over so that the ball is contacted with the instep of the foot.
Half Volley	The ball has fallen and is just starting to rise upward when it is struck with either the instep or inside of the foot.



DEFENSIVE TECHNIQUES – Skills used when defending.

- **Body Shape** – The postures utilized to maximize defending abilities.

Types of Defensive Body Postures	
When Faced Up with Attacker (Attacker and Defender are facing one another)	Defenders should be on their toes with the heels slightly off the ground. Knees and hips bent for power and to lower the center of gravity. Visual focus is on the ball. Front foot is pointed toward the attacker and the other is angled 45 to 90 degrees. This is a posture that a fencer would use in a sword fight. It allows for agility in all directions and quick turns.
To Prevent the Attacker from Turning (Attacker has his or her back to the defender)	Defenders should be on their toes with the heels slightly off the ground. Knees and hips bent for power and to lower the center of gravity. Visual focus is on the ball. The defender must stay close enough to the attacker to prevent an easy turn but there must be enough distance so that the defender can see the ball at all times



DEFENSIVE TECHNIQUES CONTINUED

- **Tackling** – To take the ball away from an attacker.

Types of Tackles	
Poke Tackle	When faced up to an attacker, the defender uses the front foot (usually with the toe) to poke the ball away.
Block Tackle	When faced up to an attacker the defender thrusts the a foot (usually with the inside of the foot) into the path of the ball. For a more forceful tackle the defender should make contact with the center of the ball when tackling. The defender may also choose to tackle the underside of the ball. This is less forceful but can be useful as it will cause the ball to pop upwards and potentially out of the reach of the attacker.
Slide Tackle	The defender will slide on the ground and use their top foot (usually on the laces) to make contact with the ball. The bottom foot is tucked under the body with the knee bent (like a baseball player sliding into a base).
Shoulder Challenge	If the defender and attacker are side by side, the defender can use the shoulder to push the attacker off of the ball.



JUGGLING – A training game where players, individually or in small groups, use various body surfaces (feet, thighs, shoulders, head, etc.) to strike the ball upwards in order to continuously keep it off of the ground. Players challenge themselves by seeing how many touches they can make on the ball without it hitting the ground.

Basic Body Parts to Use When Juggling:

- **Instep** – The foot and toes are pointed downward to create a flat surface on the top of the foot to strike the ball with. The foot is raised and kept close to the body by bending the knee and hip. The foot should be raised to make contact with the ball between the level of the knee and hip. The ball should have little to no spin after it is kicked.
- **Thighs** – The ball should make contact with the middle part of the thigh.
- **Head** – Defensive heading techniques should be utilized when juggling with the head. The knees should be bend and the player should look to strike the underside of the ball with the center of their forehead. The eyes should remain open and the mouth shut.

Starting:

- **From Hands** - Juggling is started by dropping the ball from the hands to the thighs or feet.
- **From Ground** - Juggling is started by kicking or flipping the ball up from the ground using the feet.

Training Patterns:

- **Single Juggle** - The ball is dropped from the hands and the feet or thighs are used to strike the ball upwards back to the hands so that it can be caught. This pattern of a single strike on the ball followed by a catch is used in the beginning so that the player can practice striking the ball properly.
- **Multiple Juggles** - The player attempts to juggle the ball multiple times with the same foot or thigh.
- **Alternating Juggles** - The player juggles the ball by alternating contact with the ball between the right and left feet or right and left thighs.



TACTICAL TERMINOLOGY

DEFENDING TACTICS

- **Defensive Shape** - The collective positioning of a team when defending. Good defensive shape has multiple defenders behind the ball in positions to provide: *pressure, cover and balance*.
- **Pressure (Role of 1st Defender)** – The actions of the defender, nearest to the attacker with the ball, or the attacker about to receive a pass. Immediate and constant pressure must be applied to the attacker with the ball.

Roles of the 1st Defender
Intercept the pass when possible.
Tackle when appropriate.
Delay the attack until support arrives.
Deny further penetration.
Make play predictable.

- **Cover (Role of 2nd Defender)** – The actions of the defender(s) in direct support of the 1st Defender.

Role of the 2nd Defender
Cover the first defender so that pressure can be applied if the attacker is able to dribble penetrate.
Close down passing lanes to the sides of the first defender.
Marking and tracking attackers near the ball.



DEFENDING TACTICS CONTINUED

- **Balance (Role of 3rd Defender)** – The actions of the defenders that are in supportive positions to the 2nd Defender.

Role of the 3rd Defender
Marking and tracking attackers away from the ball.
Squeeze towards the center of the field to “lock up” vital areas.
Deny penetration when the point of attack is changed from one side of the field to the other.

- **Compactness** – A concentration of defenders in an area of the field with the purpose of either winning the ball back or denying penetration. A team’s defensive shape should become more compact as they move centrally or get closer to their own goal.
- **Delay** – To slow down or disrupt an attack. If defenders are outnumbered by attackers it becomes more appropriate for them to delay the attack rather than try to win the ball back immediately. Light pressure should be applied to the attacker with the ball until the defending team can regain its defending shape.
- **Recovery** – The movements of defenders, that have been penetrated, back into supportive positions.
- **Marking** – Defenders watching over attackers (that don’t have the ball) with the purpose of keeping them from successfully becoming part of the attack. The defender should be positioned so that his or her visual field contains the defender being marked and the ball.
- **Tracking** – When defenders maintain their marks on attackers that are making forward or diagonal runs ahead of the ball.
- **High Pressure** - A style of defending where the defending team applies immediate and constant pressure to the ball (usually in the opponents defensive half of the field). This style of defending is energy intensive but can be effectively used to destroy an attacking team’s rhythm. Teams that utilize high pressure defending look to create attacking opportunities off of their opponents turnovers.



DEFENDING TACTICS CONTINUED

- **Low Pressure** - A style of defending where the defending team falls back to a designated “line” (usually in their defensive half of the field) and begins pressuring there. This style of defending requires less energy to execute and relies on team shape and compactness to win the ball back. Low pressure defending lends itself to counter attacking possibilities.
- **Transition to Defense** - The movement of players from an attacking shape to a defending shape.
- **Zonal Defending** - A defensive system where each member of the defending team (Defenders and Midfielders) is responsible for defending a specific part of the field. This type of defending requires a group of defenders to work together to win the ball back by maintaining defensive shape and compactness around the ball. It requires far less energy to execute compared to Man-to-Man Defending.
- **Man-to-Man Defending** - A defensive system where each member of the defending team is responsible for defending a specific opponent. This type of defending relies heavily on individual defending abilities and requires more energy in its execution compared to Zonal Defending.



TACTICAL TERMINOLOGY

ATTACKING TACTICS

- **First Attacker** - The attacker with the ball.

Roles of the 1st Attacker
Penetrate when possible.
Possess when penetration is not possible.
Shoot, pass or dribble to penetrate.

- **Second Attacker** - Attacker(s) in immediate support of the first attacker.

Roles of the 2nd Attacker
Provide a passing option either behind, in advance or square to the first attacker.
Make diagonal forward runs to threaten the space behind the defense. (These can be decoy runs.)
Combine with the first attacker to penetrate.

Note: See Mobility and Combinations on page 27.

- **Third Attacker** - Attackers in distant support of the first attacker.

Roles of the 3rd Attacker
Make forward runs to increase the number of players in the attack.
Allows for the point of attack to be changed by providing distant support behind and square to the 1st attacker.
Unbalances the opponent's defense by creating wide and/or forward attacking options.



ATTACKING TACTICS CONTINUED

- **Attacking Shape** - The collective positioning of a team when attacking. The team takes up positions around the central players to provide height, depth and width. The bigger the attacking shape the more space there will be to attack.

Height	Organization of attackers ahead of the ball. Stretches the field and unbalances the defense. Creates a threat to penetrate
Depth	Organization of attackers behind the ball. Provides support to maintain possession. Provides defensive cover if the ball is lost.
Width	Positioning of attackers across the field in an attempt to unbalance or pull apart a compact defense.
Linking Player	Players positioned in the middle of the team shape. They help connect the two sides of the field and the top and bottom of the formation.

- **Possession** - A team working together to maintain control over the ball. Teams use periods of possession to rest their defenders, conserve energy, allow players to move forward into the attack and to build a rhythm to their passing. A team will attempt to maintain possession, moving the ball up and back and side to side, until they can find the appropriate moment to penetrate the opponent's defense. This is also known as "probing" the opponents defense.
- **Penetration** - The act of moving the ball past defenders. Penetration can be accomplished through shooting, passing and dribbling. The primary option for penetration should be to shoot when able. If shooting is not a viable option then the ball should be passed to a teammate that will have a better opportunity to shoot. If neither a shot nor pass is an option then the attacker should dribble the ball to create an opportunity to either shoot or pass.

Penetrating Passes on the Ground	A pass on the ground that penetrates through the gaps between defenders.
Penetrating Passes in the Air	A pass that penetrates by going over the heads of the defenders.



ATTACKING TACTICS CONTINUED

- **Possession vs Penetration** - The decision to either move the ball forward to penetrate or to move laterally or backward in an attempt to maintain possession.

Factors that Influence the Possession vs Penetration Decision
Score and Time Left in the Game
Number of Attackers vs Number of Defenders
Where the Ball is on the Field
Match Ups - Strength of Attackers vs Strength of Defenders

- **Changing the Point of Attack** - The act of moving the ball from one side of the field to the other, in order to find an area of decreased defensive pressure. The lateral movement of the ball to a space on the field with decreased pressure can be utilized to either penetrate or to maintain possession.
- **Counter Attack** - The immediate attack after the ball is won back from the opponent. The aim is to quickly attack the opponent before they can transition from their attacking shape to their defensive shape.



ATTACKING TACTICS CONTINUED

- **Mobility** - The movement of attackers off of the ball. It can also be described as playing without the ball. Mobility is used to unbalance and penetrate defenders.
 - **Mobility Used to Create Space For Oneself** - The use of positional adjustments (sometimes very small) so one can receive a pass away from pressure and have a better chance to penetrate.
 - **Mobility Used to Create Space For Teammates** - Forward and diagonal runs can lead to successful penetrating passes but the mere threat of penetration created by these types of runs distract and unbalance defenses. These distracting runs or *decoy runs* create space for a teammate that has the ball.
 - **Combinations** - Two or more attackers working together to penetrate the opponents defense.

Types of Combinations	
Wall Pass	A player with the ball passes to a teammate in a forward position then immediately sprints to a position behind the defense to get the ball back.
Take Over	Two attackers are crossing paths. The player with the ball allows the teammate to take the ball over and move it in the opposite direction.
Overlap	When a trailing attacker runs around and past a teammate with the ball in an attempt to receive a forward pass or to create a diversion.
Double Pass	A two player combination that includes a forward pass to the seconds attacker, then a return pass backwards to the first attacker, then finally a penetrating forward pass to the second attacker. This is also known as “up-back-through”.
Three Person	Any improvised combination that includes three or more attackers.



ATTACKING TACTICS CONTINUED

- **Flank Play** - Any play that uses the wide areas of the field to penetrate. Attackers are more likely to find 1v1 match ups with less defensive cover along the flanks, thus making penetration down the field less complicated. The drawback is that the ball is far from goal and must be passed back into the highly defended area in front of the goal. Ultimately, flank play will give a team more scoring opportunities but there is a higher degree of technical difficulty associated with shooting and scoring balls crossed from the flanks.
- **Crossing** - Passing from the flank to a teammate in front of the goal.
 - Crosses on the Ground - If a path to the target exists then crosses should be made on the ground. Crosses played on the ground are more accurate and easier to shoot by the player in front of the goal.
 - Crosses in the Air - When defenders stand in the path between the ball and the teammate in front of the goal, it becomes necessary to play a cross in the air. The ball must be played over the head of the defender and shot on goal with either the head or on the volley.

Target Areas for Crosses	
Near Post	To beat the GK to this spot, the cross must be driven low, in the air or on the ground.
Far Post	This type of cross needs to be lofted high enough to remain out of the reach of the GK.
Slot	This is a cross (usually on the ground) that is diagonally back, away from the goal to a trailing attacker. For this cross to be effective, it is important for the timing of the cross to be slightly delayed. The delay brings the first wave of attackers and their marking defenders closer to the goal thus opening up space for the trailing attacker to receive a slotted pass.



ATTACKING TACTICS CONTINUED

- **Runs to Receive Crosses** - The mobility in the goal box that allows attackers to successfully finish from crosses.
 - **Slot Run** - The forward-most attackers, making the near and far post runs, cause the defenders to drop deep into the space in front of their goal. This often leaves an area of undefended space in the middle of the goal box for trailing attackers to receive crosses for uncontested, one time shots.
 - **Near Post Runs** - Players initially located towards the back post make good targets for Near Post Crosses. They should attempt to out-sprint defenders to an open space around the near post to receive a driven cross.
 - **Far Post Runs** - Players initially located towards the near post make good targets for Far Post Crosses. They should arc their runs back and away from goal then in towards the far post.
 - **Timing of Runs** - Crossing and Finishing require near perfect timing due to the level of difficulty of the techniques being used and because of the intense level of defensive pressure found in the area in front of the goal. The flank attacker will look up for potential targets just prior to crossing. This is the precise moment when a potential target needs to sprint to an open space to receive the cross.
 - **Recycle Runs** - If an attacker completes a run (either near post, far post or slot) and the ball is not crossed, then he or she should loop back out of the goal box thus creating space for the next wave of attackers to make their runs.



TACTICAL TERMINOLOGY

..... TRAINING GAMES

- **Technical-Functional Training Environment** - Small sided games in which specific situational tactics and skills are addressed. Each year, players will train in a specific match like situation (1v1, 2v1, 2v2 and 3v2, etc.). Players will master the skills and tactics (attacking, defending, individual tactics and small group tactics) involved in each situation through both a trial and error process (“The game is the greatest Teacher”) and through subtle guidance from the coach.
- **Scrimmage** - These are games played toward the end of the training session. If the coach desires, conditions and restrictions can be applied to bring out the technical and/or tactical topics for the training session. Some portion of each scrimmage should be played without conditions and restrictions. This will allow the players to test their skills and decisions under conditions that will be closest to those found in the game.



EVALUATION FORMS

The following pages contain technical and tactical evaluation forms for each curriculum level. Coaches can use these forms to track the progress of players from week to week, season to season, or year to year. They can be a useful tool for determining which players are on target, which players need extra help and which players might need an advanced level of challenge.

The evaluation forms will help coaches communicate the progress of their players with the Director of Coaching and Coordinators. This will be particularly helpful during tryouts and other periods of time when team placements for players are being considered.

Using the Forms

- On the **Technical Evaluation Forms**, players will be graded on a 0 to 2 scale for both their right and left sides (heading excluded).

0	The player does not perform this technique correctly during unopposed practices situations.
1	The player can consistently perform this technique during unopposed practice situations.
2	The player can consistently utilize this technique during games.


- On the **Tactical Evaluation Forms**, players will be graded on a 0 to 2 scale based on their comprehension of tactical concepts.

0	The player does not demonstrates an understanding of a particular tactical concept.
1	The player consistently demonstrates an understanding of a particular tactical concept during reduced pressure games in practices.
2	The player consistently demonstrates and understanding of a particular tactical concept in games.

Note: A player is deemed “consistent” if they can perform a skill or tactic 75% of the time or better.

Note: Juggling skill will be graded as a “yes” or “no” based on the player’s ability to meet the objective.

Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

Level 1 (U7) Technical Objectives	Grade	
	Left	Right
Dribbling		
Inside of the Foot		
Laces		
Sole of the Foot		
Passing		
Inside of the Foot - 5 yards		
Receiving		
Inside of the Foot -on the ground, soft first touch		
Finishing		
Inside of the Foot (1v0 to Goal)		


Grading:

0 = Cannot perform technique correctly during unopposed practice situations

1 = Performs technique consistently during unopposed practice situations

2 = Consistently utilizes technique during games.

Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

Level 2 (U8) Technical Objectives 	Grade	
	Left	Right
Dribbling		
Inside of the Foot		
Laces		
Sole of the Foot		
Running with the Ball		
Passing		
Inside of the Foot - 5 yards		
Receiving		
Inside of the Foot - on the ground, soft first touch		
Finishing		
Inside of the Foot (1v0 and 1v1 to goal)		


Grading:

0 = Cannot perform technique correctly during unopposed practice situations

1 = Performs technique consistently during unopposed practice situations

2 = Consistently utilizes technique during games.


Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

Level 3 (U9) Technical Objectives	Grade	
	Left	Right
		
Dribbling		
Sole of the Foot		
Running with the Ball		
Turning with the Inside of the Foot		
Passing		
Inside of the Foot - 10 yards		
Receiving		
Inside of the Foot - on the ground, forward first touch		
Finishing		
Inside of the Foot - 6-8 yards on breakaway vs GK		

Grading:

- 0 = Cannot perform technique correctly during unopposed practice situations
- 1 = Performs technique consistently during unopposed practice situations
- 2 = Consistently utilizes technique during games.


Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

Level 4 (U10) Technical Objectives	Grade	
	Left	Right
		
Dribbling		
Turning with the Outside of the Foot		
Turning with the Sole of the Foot		
Changing Speed		
Passing		
Inside of the Foot - 15 yards		
Receiving		
Inside of the Foot - on the ground, lateral first touch		
Out of the Air with the laces - soft first touch		
Finishing		
Inside of the Foot - 8-12 yards		
Defending		
Poke Tackle		
Body Shape when Faced Up with Attacker		
Juggling		
Thigh - Single	yes / no	yes / no
Foot - Single	yes / no	yes / no

Grading:

- 0 = Cannot perform technique correctly during unopposed practice situations
- 1 = Performs technique consistently during unopposed practice situations
- 2 = Consistently utilizes technique during games.

Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____


Level 4 (U10) Tactical Objectives	Grade
	
Defending	
Pressure (Role of the 1st Defender)	
Attacking	
Shape - Width	
Role of the 1st Attacker	

Grading:

0 = Does not demonstrate understanding of tactical concept

1 = Consistently demonstrates understanding of tactical concept during reduced pressure games in practice


2 = Consistently demonstrates understanding of tactical concept in games

Level 5 (U11) Technical Objectives	Grade	
	Left	Right
		
Dribbling		
Shielding		
Change in Direction		
Passing		
One Touch with Inside of the Foot - 10 yards		
Instep - 20 yards		
Receiving		
Across the Body		
Out of the Air - inside of the foot - lateral first touch		
Heading		
Basic Technique		
Finishing		
Shooting with the Instep - 15 yards		
Defending		
Block Tackle		
Body Shape when Faced Up with Attacker		
Juggling		
Thigh - Multiple (5 reps)	yes / no	yes / no
Foot - Multiple (5 reps)	yes / no	yes / no

Grading:

- 0 = Cannot perform technique correctly during unopposed practice situations
- 1 = Performs technique consistently during unopposed practice situations
- 2 = Consistently utilizes technique during games.

Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

Level 5 (U11) Tactical Objectives	Grade
	
Defending	
Pressure (Role of the 1st Defender)	
Compactness	
Attacking	
Role of the 1st Attacker	
Penetration - Passing on the Ground	
Combination - Wall Pass	
Shape - Height	
Shape - Depth	

Grading:

- 0 = Does not demonstrate understanding of tactical concept
- 1 = Consistently demonstrates understanding of tactical concept during reduced pressure games in practice
- 2 = Consistently demonstrates understanding of tactical concept in games


Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

Level 6 (U12) Tactical Objectives	Grade
	
Defending	
Cover (Role of the 2nd Defender)	
Delay	
Attacking	
Role of the 2nd Attacker	
Possession	
Playing Out of the Back	
Mobility - Creation of Space for Teammates	
Combination - Overlap	
Combination - Take Over	
Shape - Linking Player	
F flank Play - Crossing to the Slot	
F flank Play - Slot Run to Receive	
F flank Play - Timing of Runs	

Grading:

- 0 = Does not demonstrate understanding of tactical concept
- 1 = Consistently demonstrates understanding of tactical concept during reduced pressure games in practice
- 2 = Consistently demonstrates understanding of tactical concept in games

Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

 Level 7(U13) Technical Objectives	Grade	
	Left	Right
Passing		
Outside of the Foot - 15 yards		
Instep - 30 yards		
Chipping		
Out of the Air with the Inside of the Foot - 10 yards		
Receiving		
Outside of the Foot - Lateral First Touch		
Turning with Back to Goal		
Heading		
Defensive Heading		
Finishing		
Front Volley		
Side Volley		
Long Range - 18-25 yards		
Defending		
Shoulder Challenge		
Body positioning to prevent the attacker from turning		
Juggling		
Feet - Alternating (25 reps)	yes / no	yes / no


Grading:

0 = Cannot perform technique correctly during unopposed practice situations

1 = Performs technique consistently during unopposed practice situations

2 = Consistently utilizes technique during games.

Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

Level 7 (U13) Tactical Objectives	Grade
	
Defending	
Balance (Role of the 3rd Defender)	
Shape	
Recovery Runs	
Transition to Defense	
Attacking	
Possession vs. Penetration Decisions	
Changing the Point of Attack	
Combination - Double Pass	
Flank Play - Crossing to the Near Post	
Flank Play - Near Post Runs to Receive	
Flank Play - Timing of Runs	


Grading:

0 = Does not demonstrate understanding of tactical concept

1 = Consistently demonstrates understanding of tactical concept during reduced pressure games in practice

2 = Consistently demonstrates understanding of tactical concept in games

Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

 Level 8 (U14) Technical Objectives	Grade	
	Left	Right
Passing		
Bending Passes -Inside of the Foot - 20-30 yards		
Outside of the Foot - 20 yards		
Instep - 30+ yards		
Out of the Air with the Laces - 30 yards		
Receiving		
Turning with Back to Goal		
Heading		
Attacking Heading		
Protecting Oneself		
Finishing		
Half Volley		
Bending Shots		
Juggling		
Feet - Alternating (50 Reps)	yes / no	yes / no


Grading:

0 = Cannot perform technique correctly during unopposed practice situations

1 = Performs technique consistently during unopposed practice situations

2 = Consistently utilizes technique during games.

Player: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

Level 8 (U14) Tactical Objectives	Grade
	
Defending	
Tracking	
Zonal Defending	
High/Low Pressure Defending	
Attacking	
Role of the 3rd Attacker	
Penetration - Passing through the Air	
Playing in the Final Third	
Counter Attack	
Mobility - Creation of Space for Oneself	
Combination - 3 Player Combinations	
Flank Play - Crossing to the Far Post	
Flank Play - Far Post Runs to Receive	
Flank Play - Timing of Runs	
Flank Play - Recycling Runs	

Grading:

0 = Does not demonstrate understanding of tactical concept

1 = Consistently demonstrates understanding of tactical concept during reduced pressure games in practice

2 = Consistently demonstrates understanding of tactical concept in games



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