



TEAM TRAINING COACHES MANUAL

The South Shore Futbol Training Coaching Staff

- Through our organization, our coaches will have the opportunity to participate in USSF Grassroots and 'D' Coaching Courses and NSCAA Coaching Courses.
- Coaches will be required to acquire their 'D' License after their first year of coaching teams with us.
- If a coach is put through a course by the organization they must remain with us for at least a full year after the course. If the coach leaves the organization on his/her own within that time they will be required to repay the organization for 50% of the course cost.
- There will be quarterly and seasonal meetings, which coaches must attend.
- All our coaches should conduct their team's training sessions according to the club's vision.
- All our teams should play according to the club's vision.

Coaching Responsibilities

1. Mission and Goals

- Developing players and building teams who compete at their highest level.
- Every soccer player in our organization has the right to receive the best possible soccer training.
- Provide the best coaching available, and to promote the physical development of our local youth players through soccer.
- Foster a culture of sportsmanship and fair play

2. General Principles

- Player development is first and foremost. Results are secondary to development.
- Through the U15 age group, training and development are more important than the game result.
- Respect the individual player. Allow each player to develop his or her individual qualities.
- If appropriate, allow players to 'play up'.
- Tactically play all players in different positions to develop their game understanding.
- Skills training should be our main focus when working with young players.
- Coaches should always consider what is best for the individual player.
- Allow the players to be creative.

3. Tips for the Youth Coach

- Patience is key.
- When your team steps on the field they should do everything possible to win the game, however, your emphasis should be on their quality of play.
- Set individual and team goals. Periodically sit down with the players individually to discuss their progress.
- As a youth coach, encourage your player to play at the highest level.
- Encourage your best players to play in demanding positions.
- Encourage players to attend extra training.
- Have organized practices, which are fun, challenging and competitive. Show up with a plan.
- The key to your practices should be repetitions of the fundamentals, however, try to present these exercises in different variations.
- Be excited about the game. If you are excited, the players will follow suit.

TEAM TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

- Having uniformity doesn't mean that all soccer will look the same within all teams at all times
- It does mean that our soccer community can be better aligned with our player development objectives and we can collectively and consistently develop players with a well-rounded competency both technically and tactically.
- A uniform framework also allows our coaches to provide consistent messaging and education for parents, players and other coaches.
- Coaches should be creative and add their personality into their teams all within the guidelines and structure of the clubs vision and development model.

The 'Common Thread' for our Teams

Pre-Training

Each team should have activities they can do before training or games begin:

- Small-sided welcome games (1v1, 2v2, 3v3, 4v4)
- Rondo of 4v1, 4v2, 5v2, 5v3, 6v3, 7v3
- Transition Rondo (more than one grid to play into once you reach a goal; defined by the coach).
- Juggling skills

- Players should not be shooting or striking the ball before warming up.

Change of Speed and Direction

This is a huge developmental skill that players must learn from a very young age. Players must be taught how changes in speed and direction can impact:

- Beating an opponent 1v1
- Buying time for teammates movement
- Allowing passing, shooting and dribbling lanes to open
- Controlling opponents momentum
- Change of pace as a visual cue to combine with a teammate
- Teach the importance of combining change of speed with direction when dribbling

Attacking

- We have a distinct style of play across all of our teams.
- We strive to complete the large majority of passes on the ground, which develops players technically.
- Passing the ball on the ground with pace from different distances and receiving the ball while keeping it moving will be encouraged in all age groups.
- From U9-U19 all teams should be playing out from the back in all training sessions (use the build out line in training if needed).
- In the back we have the best numerical advantage. Building attacks from there allows our teams to pick and choose when we go forward and when we transfer our numerical advantage in the back into midfield, then into the attack to consistently create overloads when going forward.
- All teams must feel comfortable playing the ball from the back through the midfield and from there to the final third of the field.
- All teams must try to dominate possession of the ball. Players will be encouraged to support and move, thus creating passing options.
- When we have the ball, look to play forward. However, if you don't like what you see, keep possession of the ball with our team.
- When we have the ball, create or stretch the space on the field.

Defending

- When the opponents have the ball, condense or compact spaces on the field.
- We defend from central, to wide areas of the field. The middle of the field is the most dangerous area.

- *5 Second Rule:* When possession is lost, players must react quickly and apply pressure to regain the ball. Once possession is regained, players will be positioned immediately to counter-attack.

Mental

- When we step on the field, we play to win the game.
- We win as a team, we lose as a team.
- Encourage players to play with flair, creativity and confidence.
- Respect, don't fear your opponent.
- Accept the referee's decisions.
- Play within the team concept.
- Communicate with your teammates.
- We control the pace of the game.
- Keep the team connected, don't get too stretched.
- Constructive criticism is part of development.

Goal Kicks

- Goal kicks should be taken quickly and played short if it is on to do so. Players must be encouraged to play out from the back starting at a very young age.
- If it is not on to play short, teams should 'tuck in' and shift to one side where they can compete for the second ball.
- Coaches need to provide positive and constructive feedback to players. Starting positions, angles and what is option one, two, three and so on.
- Give them the confidence to play in front of goal where they are numbers up. Yes, we CAN play through the middle of the field when it makes sense.
- Provoke a reaction by dribbling out of the back sucking opponents out of their defensive shape.
- Communicate the plan to implement this with your parents. Let them know what to expect and why it is crucial for a youth team to play in this way.

Corner Kicks

- These can vary between short and long. Mixing the two into each game will keep your players focused and will catch opponents off guard.
- Play quickly, be sharp and try to catch opponents by surprise on the first corner of each match.

Free Kicks

- Set the ball down and play quickly. Do not allow your players to all run away from the spot of the kick hoping a long ball falls to their feet. Support the ball and play.
- If the free kick can be hit into the opponents' penalty area then it is on to do so, trying to create a chance on goal. The service should be played into a dangerous area behind the last defender and in front of the goalkeeper.

General Principles of Play for Coaches, Players, and Teams

Coaches

- Possession games are a means to improve both the technique and tactical understanding of the players. All possession though has a purpose; to score goals.
- Opposition will be encouraged to increase the competitiveness of the players.
- High-intensity games based on speed and agility. Short but intense working-periods.

Players

- Play 1, 2 or 3 touch when we can: Minimizing the number of touches improves the speed of play OR, you can choose to employ a 2 or 3 touch minimum to encourage a positive first touch, good vision and awareness, and the ability to absorb and evade pressure. As a coach, make sure to not over-use touch restrictions in your training sessions. Training sessions should be realistic to the game and only use restrictions as a tool to improve your players' technical abilities.
- Keep the game simple: Do not force situations, over-dribble or be careless with the ball.
- Keep the ball on the ground: A ball on the ground is easier to control and can be moved more efficiently by the team.
- Accuracy and quality of the pass: Passing must be firm and accurate, with the proper weight.
- First touch: Make a clean, controlled first touch without stopping the ball. Take the touch away from pressure and into free space. (Directional touch)
- Perception and awareness: All players with or without the ball should constantly scan the field.
- 1v1 situations: Encourage determination to regain control of the ball in defense and keep it simple in attack by taking a touch to the side, at speed, to beat the defender.
- Individual transition: Players must react quickly when possession changes from attack to defense and vice-versa.
- Shooting: Always keep an eye on the goal. All players are encouraged to shoot.
- Take risks: Soccer is an error prone sport and mistakes are part of the game and learning process. Players are encouraged to take risks in training sessions to increase the speed of play.

Team

- All players attack and all players defend: All players must be involved in the game as a unit.
- Numerical advantage: Soccer is a game of numbers where we try to create a numerical advantage in attack and avoid being in a numerical disadvantage in defense. (overloads)
- Flow of the ball: The ball should flow from inside (of the space) to outside and outside to inside. Balls out wide are more secure and the ball in the middle increases the options of play.
- Triangle principle and passing options: The player in possession of the ball must receive constant support and have at least two passing options.
- Speed of play: Quick movement of the ball creates 2v1 situations. (Combination play)
- Movement off the ball: Find the best available space to create passing options for the player in possession of the ball.
- Pressure as a unit: Organized pressure forces the opponents to commit errors.
- Transition: Improve transition by reducing the number of passes needed to arrive at the target area or the opponent's goal.
- Direction of the game: The game flows in two directions. Keep the essence of the game in the majority of your practices.
- Take initiative during the game: Team breakdowns will occur. The team must be capable of adapting to new situations and imposing its own style of play during the game.

Principles of Attack

- **Score Goals:** The reason we play – to score goals!
- **Penetration:** Advancing the ball toward the goal we are attacking by playing it past an opponent or group of opponents (Breaking the line). Dribbling, passing and shooting can be penetration. We penetrate to create opportunities to score goals.
- **Support:** Provide proper angles and distances of support to the player in possession (reaction) or the player about to be in possession (anticipation and reading the game). The player on the ball must have options to their left, right, in front of and behind them. This support must exist as your teammate receives the ball (timing).
- **Width:** Providing wide support of the ball to the right and left stretches opposing defenders, creating gaps between opposing players that we can penetrate.

- **Mobility:** Movement off the ball to drag defenders out of position (unbalance defense). Make defenders change their position in reaction. Make defenders make decisions.
- **Depth/Height:** Support in front of, and behind, our teammate in possession of the ball. Getting length and depth allows us to spread our opponent and create gaps to connect to teammates and penetrate.
- **Improvisation:** Creativity and unexpected play (1v1 or combining); flair!

Principles of Defense

The main goal of defending is to get the ball back so we can score! If we cannot recover the ball, we want to stop penetration (first principle of attack!) and then provide good defensive shape to recover the ball.

- **Recovery:** Recover possession of the ball immediately; the best time to get the ball back is right after we give it away.
- **Pressure:** Pressure on the ball denies penetration. Keep your body between the ball and your goal. If we don't get pressure to the ball, our opponent can play a greater number of passes, especially long balls.
- **Cover:** Supporting players nearest the ball taking up good angles and distance of support to deny penetrating passes (splits).
- **Balance:** Players further away are providing good team shape and balance so that we can stop further penetration if our pressure is broken.
- **Compactness:** Getting close enough to close any gaps to deny penetration.
- **Patience:** Not getting beaten by being overly anxious to win the ball when it isn't winnable. Do not foul when we have good shape and pressure to the ball. Read the following cues of when, where and to whom your opponent will play the ball: Their Eyes – where and to whom they look is often where the ball goes -Their Body Mechanics – a big long step is a long ball, a short step is a short ball -Their plant foot typically points to where and whom the ball will go.

Always consider the four main moments in a game:

- We have possession
- The opponent has possession
- Transition from attack to defense
- Transition from defense to attack.

When we are in Possession:

- Does everyone understand that the objective of the game is to score goals?

- Are we making it difficult for the opponent to defend?
- Do we use all the space on the field? Width as well as depth?
- Are we making the opponent chase the ball?
- Are we getting the right players in scoring situations?
- Is there proper movement when we have the ball?
- Does every player understand his or her role when we have the ball?
- Are players creating space for each other by moving in and out of space?
- Are we playing the ball deep when appropriate?
- Are we using the wide players and are we getting crosses in front of the goal?
- Are we using the goalkeeper in the build-up?
- Is our build-up too fast or too slow?
- How is the quality of the pass?
- Is there too much dribbling?
- Are we switching the field?
- Are we getting players out of the back involved in the offense?
- Are we taking advantage of 1 vs. 1 situations?
- Are the players communicating?

When the Opponents are in Possession:

- Are we collectively getting pressure on the ball immediately?
- Are we marking?
- Are we making it difficult for the opponent to start their attack?
- Are we winning the 1 vs. 1 battles?
- Is the spacing between the players correct?
- Are we committing too many fouls?
- Are we taking away opponents time and space?
- Do we have pressure and cover around the ball?
- Are we communicating?
- Are we aggressive in winning the 1 vs. 1 battles and 50/50 balls?
- Is our goalkeeper directing and organizing out of the back?

The Transition from Offense to Defense:

- How did we lose the ball? (Short pass, long pass, dribble, etc)
- Do the players react quickly during the transition?
- Is there immediate pressure on the ball?

- Are we organized as a team?

The Transition from Defense to Offense:

- Are we looking to go forward immediately?
- Are we looking to keep the ball in possession?
- Are we looking to slow down the play, or speed up the play?

Aspects that are flexible and help organize the practice:

Space	Keep the organization of the space simple. The initial set up, with small changes, should be maintained throughout the whole session. Resetting cones during a session can easily disturb the flow of training. Attention during the session should be focused on making the coaching points.
Time	Time is flexible. Let the practice flow and make the coaching points at the right time, using breaks to give feedback to the group
Intensity	Use short periods of time at high-intensity and utilize resting periods to explain the practices or make coaching points.
Rules	Use different rules to adapt the practices to the characteristics of the players and make the exercises age-appropriate.
Number of players	Practice should progress from smaller to bigger groups of players. Use support players to create superiority in numbers and to make the exercises easier for the attackers.

Games/activities are organized into three separate categories. It is important for coaches to select games/activities from each category that are age group appropriate. The categories are:

- **Body Awareness** — activities that emphasize the use of body parts, motion, coordination; balance with and without the ball.
- **Target Games** — activities that involve solving the objective by going from “point A to B.” In contrast to Maze Games, these activities are more directionally defined and can be done both with and without the ball.
- **Maze Games** — activities in which the player has the opportunity to move in a 360° or circle environment with and without the ball. Even though the area is defined, it does not necessarily have a specific target or boundary to go to. These activities allow the players to make decisions while moving in all directions. There are times when the concepts of each of these three types of activities may be utilized in a single activity.

Here are some items that should be included in a training session:

Warm-up

A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual or small group activities that involve the ball. Since there is typically one topic for the session, the warm-up should lead into the theme of the day. The warm-up should get the players ready to play. It should be lively, fun, and engaging as well as instructional. There is nothing like a good, fast-paced activity to grab the player's attention and make them glad that they came to practice.

Individual or Small Group Activities

Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not necessarily a real 1v1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals or cooperate in small groups in a game environment. An example would be a kind of keep-away game, or small-sided games that bring out or emphasize a specific skill or topic. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait in lines. Play games of "inclusion" instead of games where the "loser sits". Be creative. These players like "crazy" games with a lot of action.

Play the Game

Small-sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 4v4 up to 9v9. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball over a goal line in order to get a point). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible. Finish this stage with a real game with regular rules. Players need to apply their newly learned abilities to the real game.

Cool Down & Feedback or Homework

Finish the session with a cool down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what they learned during the session. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own or learn something about the game. Homework only works for the older kids and remember to keep it simple and fun because they probably already have homework from school. Maybe share a video with the team that you want the players to watch before the next session.

Summary of Ideas

Set up situations where the players can learn by playing the game. The game is the best teacher for young players. Coaches can often be more helpful to a young player's development by organizing less, saying less and allowing the players to do more. Set up a game and let the kids play. Keep most of your comments for before and after practice, within the flow of the activity or game and during water breaks. Comments should be kept short and simple. Be comfortable organizing a session that looks like pickup soccer.

Teaching and learning the game of soccer is a process: make your goals seasonal, as well as daily and weekly. Often, at the younger ages, the developmental efforts of one season are not noticeable in children until sometime in the next season. Set age-appropriate goals i.e., know what the child is able to do at that age.

From a developmental standpoint, the young ages are the best ones for learning skills. Spend the time now encouraging this growth. By the age of 17 the capacity to pick up new motor skills begins to wane, while the ability to conceptualize team organization, tactics and strategy increases. As a coach, work with these strengths, not against them.

Do not expect games and practices to look like professional soccer. If you want to use high level soccer as a teaching tool, focus on the individual skill level of professional players, not their organization. Give your players opportunities to see what older, more skilled players, i.e., a high school, college player or an older brother or sister, can do with the ball. On occasion, invite some of these players to participate in your practice. Use them to model good soccer qualities. Let your players learn by experiencing the game alongside or against these better players. Older players can also be used as "neutral players." In this case, the neutral player helps whichever team has the ball i.e., he or she never defends. Maybe that neutral player has limited touches and/or can't score, but he or she gives the team with the ball a better chance of keeping the ball. By helping to maintain possession, the neutral player(s) helps the game maintain some rhythm, and gives the kids a clearer picture of the game's possibilities.

Recognize and understand how the skills learned at each age are connected to preparing the player to move into the next phase of his or her development. Know what the next level of play is, and then general tools that your players should carry with them as they move on. Help them to be prepared.

Allow your players to develop these requisite skills in an environment where the main goal is to have fun with the ball.

The value of matches is that they provide youngsters with an opportunity to showcase their newly acquired skill and creativity. It is always nice to win, however that should not be your focus at the younger age groups (through 14 years).

Have a clear idea of what it is you want to accomplish at practice. Create exercises/games that replicate and repeat the movements and situations that are found in soccer and that allow the player to grow comfortable and confident with the ball at his or her feet. Encourage players to move with the ball at his or her feet and deal with boundaries, opponents, teammates and goals. Keep in mind that soccer is a pretty simple game. If you are involved in soccer for long enough, you begin to realize that all the many little games that work are really just variations on the same basic concepts. As long as the parameters that you have established in your exercises/small-sided games are true to soccer (goals for scoring and defending), create the problems that you want the kids to solve (protecting the ball while dribbling, etc.), and allow your players to be challenged and find some success, you're on the right track. Don't be afraid to experiment to find what works best.

Remember that the game is the best teacher for the players. Coaches and parents should think of themselves more as facilitators, monitors, guides or even participants, to provide a rich environment for the kids to learn from and enjoy.

Self-Reflection Questions For Your Sessions

Are the activities Fun? Players learn better in an enjoyable environment. When players feel that a specific activity is fun, it is a good indicator that the activity is developmentally appropriate.

Are the activities organized? This does not mean regimented, it means there should be rules and objectives.

Are the players involved in the activities? Players enjoy activities that present an achievable challenge. Activities that are too difficult will frustrate players and activities that are too easy will cause boredom. Design activities that engage children in play at all times.

Are players using creativity and decision-making? Player development is enhanced when challenges require players to solve problems by using their own skills and cognitive abilities. Children need to be challenged to "Fix It." "Fix It" implies giving the players the first opportunity to solve the problem. Let them fail at first if need be. Decisions may be spatial (where to run or pass), temporal (when do I pass or run), or kinesthetic (how do I handle the ball)? These need to be present in all activities for learning to occur. Remember that learning is not efficient and that effective learning may be the result of inefficient trials.

Is the space used appropriately? A space that is too large or too small will affect the quality of an activity. Also, make sure the area is safe.

Is the coach's feedback appropriate? It is important to encourage young players. Positive feedback will encourage players to continue to try.

Are there implications for the game? Players should be engaged in activities that help develop psychomotor, cognitive and psychosocial abilities that are needed to play soccer. The activities presented in a training session must in some way reflect the demands a player faces in the game. The younger the player the less clear this may seem, while the older the player (i.e. 10 or older), the more clear it will become. However, the implications for the game are even more important for the younger players. The coach at this level is providing the foundational movement and thinking skills that will enable the player to later solve more complex problems.

Developmentally Appropriate? This challenges the coach to examine the appropriateness of the activity. The requirements or demands of the activity should fall within the range of player's abilities. Examples include: Attempting to teach a wall-pass to U8's when they cannot think in advance of the ball or asking a U6 player to stay in a specific position when their spatial awareness is limited and possess a strong desire to chase the ball.

Are you providing Clear, Concise and Correct Information? How instructions are given is crucial when dealing with young children. Too much information overwhelms them and too little information doesn't give them enough to get started. Provide enough information to get them started and then add new challenges.

Simple to Complex? Are the activities presented in a way that allows for ongoing modifications (progression) and new challenges to meet the player's interests and abilities?

Safe and Appropriate Training Area? The area should be free of hazardous materials (e.g., glass, stones, branches, holes, etc.) and be safe from traffic or other environmental dangers. The training environment should be psychologically safe. Does the child feel emotionally secure? Is the fear of failure reduced? Can the child take creative risks without the fear of admonishment from the coach?

Technical Development Areas of Focus For 9-10 Year Olds

The main areas of focus: mastering the ball, learning how to train properly, and creating a foundation for the training environment we want to cultivate across the entire club.

Warm up: Focus on different variations of ball control and continuing to develop body movement.

Main Activities: The main activities are developing ball control while learning how to problem solve individually and with teammates. Each session ends with small sided games to goals.

Activities: Different variations of shooting, passing & dribbling. Each activity can build into more difficult variations or progressions that help to develop technical abilities & combinational play.

- Example of games: 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, 4v4

- Games can be played to end lines or with multiple goals.
- Each session ends with small sided games to goals.
- Focus on technical fundamentals.
- 1v1 attack and defense.
- Possession games: 3v1, 4v2, 5v2.
- Game situations in which the emphasis is on 'good soccer'. In the attack: Control the ball, pass and support.
On defense: contain and mark ball-side and goal-side.
- Players should gain an understanding of the different positions and responsibilities on the field.
- Concentrate on overall body movement and athleticism.

Age Group Specific Areas of Focus

Technical:

- Train all the technical aspects of the game.
- Coerver Skills Training.
- 3v1 and 4v2 possession games.
- Attacking 1v1 situations to goal.
- Defending 1v1 situations.
- Passing and receiving.
- Movement without the ball.
- Attacking 2v1 situations to goal.
- Attack vs. defense. Understanding their positions and roles.
- Learning to play as groups. Forwards, midfielders and defenders.
- Learning to play within their positions.

Tactical:

- Understand the roles of the positions on the team.
- Understand the rules of the game.
- Developing defensive awareness. Ball-side and goal-side.
- Developing attacking awareness. Moving off the ball. Creating passing lanes.

Conditioning:

- Quickness and agility through fun games.
- Endurance through appropriate training.
- Game fitness through 1v1, 2v2, 3v3 and 4v4 interval training.

Staff Objectives:

- A U10 player should be able to shoot the ball high and low, inside, outside and with the laces.
- A U10 player should be able to receive and control the ball with both feet.
- A U10 player should be able to dribble the ball and run with the ball.
- A U10 player should be able to know what to do in a 1v1 duel, both defensively as well as offensively.
- A U10 player should understand the concepts of the 3v1 and 4v2 possession games.
- A U10 player should be able to demonstrate basic Coerver moves.

Soccer for this age is a fun activity for the kids that encourages a lot of games to goals and encourages experimentation with the ball. The ratio of balls to players should be small enough that all your players are involved all the time. The focus is on developing a relationship with the ball in a joyful environment.

Consider This:

At the youth level, games are a forum for players to test their ball skills and game awareness, and should be considered an additional means of development, rather than the objective. Results are important as it gives the players a competitive focus in the match. Coaches are encouraged to promote soccer that:

- is free flowing,
- is coach-guided, not coach-directed,
- demands that all players on the field, regardless of their specified position, participate in defending and attacking.

What I hear I forget, What I hear and see I remember a little; What I hear, see and ask questions about or discuss with someone else, I begin to understand; What I hear, see, discuss and do, I acquire knowledge and skill; What I teach to another, I master. (Adapted from the Chinese Philosopher Confucius)

Characteristics of Soccer Players at this Age

- Motor skills are becoming more refined and reliable. Boys and girls begin to develop separately.
- Ability to stay on task is lengthened. They have the ability to sequence thought and actions.
- Greater diversity in playing ability and physical maturity.
- Skills are emerging. Becoming more predictable and recognizable.
- Able to pace themselves, to plan ahead.
- Increased self-responsibility. They remember to bring their own equipment but still forget to take it home.
- Starting to recognize basic tactical concepts, but not exactly sure why certain decisions are better.
- Repetition of technique is very important, but it must be dynamic, not static.

- Continued positive reinforcement needed.
- Explanations must be brief, concise, and mention “why”.
- Becoming more “serious”. Openly, intensively competitive, without intention of fouling.
- Adult outside of the family may take on added significance.
- Prefer identification with a team. Like to have good kit, equipment, soccer balls.
- More inclined towards wanting to play instead of being told to play. Will initiate play more.

Things to Expect

Some coaches say that the 9 and 10 year-old players are beginning to “turn the corner” and starting to look like real soccer players. However, games are still frantically paced and unpredictable for the most part. These players are starting to find out how much fun it is to play the game skillfully, but they will still stop and laugh if the referee gets hit in the backside with the ball during a game. Some other things that we can expect when working with this aged player are:

- They start to understand offsides, but still forget themselves when the goal is in front of them.
- They will really beat up on each other during practice... especially boy’s teams.
- During a game, the parents will scream out “HAND BALL” or “COME ON REF, CALL IT BOTH WAYS” at least fifteen times.
- They might cry after the game if they lose, but will forget it if you ask them if you want to go out for burgers and fries.
- You might actually catch them practicing on their own without you telling them to do so.
- Their parents are telling them to do one thing during the game, you are telling them another thing, but what they end up doing might be what their friend is telling them to do.
- You will see a pass that is deliberate. You might even see a “back pass”!

Best Qualities of a Coach for This Age Player

Energetic. Plays while facilitating practice. Stimulates ideas. The coach should have a firm grasp of both the youth game and the junior game. He or she should have an appreciation for creativity and independent thinking. At the same time, he or she should be able to communicate group and team topics to the players in a clear and simple manner.

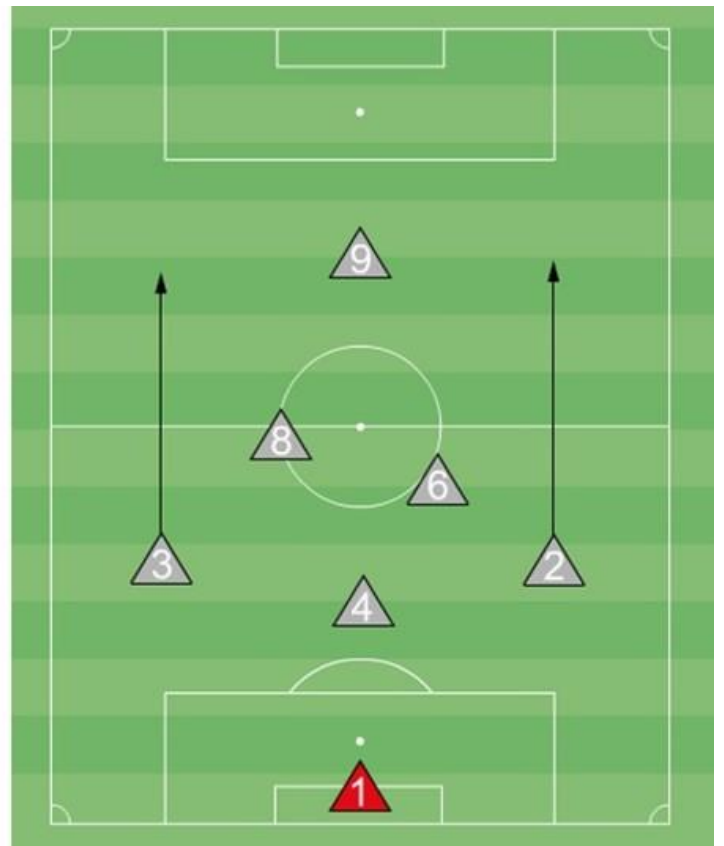
7v7 Standards & Player Development Philosophy

Build Out Line

- The build out line promotes playing the ball out of the back in a less pressured setting
- When the goalkeeper has the ball in his or her hands during play from the opponent, the opposing team must move behind the build out line until the ball is put into play
- Once the opposing team is behind the build out line, the goalkeeper can pass, throw or roll the ball into play (punts and drop kicks are not allowed)
- After the ball is put into play by the goalkeeper, the opposing team can cross the build out line and play resumes as normal
- The opposing team must also move behind the build out line during a goal kick until the ball is put into play
- If a goalkeeper punts or drop kicks the ball, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense
- If the punt or drop kick occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred
- The build out line will also be used to denote where offside offenses can be called. Players cannot be penalized for an offside offense between the halfway line and the build out line. Players can be penalized for an offside offense between the build out line and goal line

7v7 Build Out Line Practical Applications

- Ideally, the goalkeeper will wait to put the ball into play once all opponents are past the build out line however, the goalkeeper can put the ball into play sooner but he or she does so accepting the positioning of the opponents and the consequences of how play resumes
- Referees should be flexible when enforcing the 6 second rule and counting the time of possession should only begin when all opponents have moved behind the build out line
- Field of Play, 55-65 yards (length), 35-45 yards (width)
- Build out lines should be equidistant between the penalty area line and halfway line
- Substitutions are unlimited and can occur at any stoppage
- Duration of the Match, 2 halves, 25 minutes halves, 10 minute halftime



7v7 Formations: U9 & U10

Within the **1-2-3-1** or **1-3-2-1**, players should be aware of their positional roles on attack and defense, especially in counterattacking and defending. When the team is attacking from its defensive third or building out from a goal kick or keeper distribution, players should be aware of spacing between lines.

The principle of spreading out and body position should be recognized by the players. It brings out triangles in attack.

Defensive compactness, both vertically and horizontally, as well as the value of the first defender in pressing the ball throughout the field should be of importance to this age.

Technical Development Areas of Focus for 11 – 12 Year Olds

The main areas of focus: continuation of mastering the ball and learning principles of play. Players transition into a Training to Train Phase now that a foundation has been set from previous years of playing.

New tactical concepts: Principles of Attacking & Principles of Defending. Several of these principles are very complicated and at this stage of development the focus is creating a foundation based on these principles.

- **Principles of Attacking:** Penetration, providing support, movement off the ball, width & depth, and improvisation/creativity.
- **Principles of Defending:** pressure & cover, delaying, balance/team shape, compactness, control & restraint (not diving in), and counter attack.

Warm up: Games or activities that work on different variations of ball control and team problem solving.

Main Activities: Games focus on individual and team problem solving. Players work on mastering activities learned from previous years and expanding on those activities with more complexity. Each session should end with small sided games to goals.

Activities: Different variations of passing & dribbling. Each activity will be building into higher level variations to improve technical abilities, combinational play, and problem solving.

- Example of games: 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, 4v3, 6v6
- Games can be played to end lines or with multiple goals (4 or 6 goal games).
- Possession games with and without neutral players
- Introducing principles of attacking & defending
 - Switching the point of attack, playing out of the back, width & depth
 - pressure and cover, where to force the ball, not diving in.
- Players need to practice the technical fundamentals under game pressure. The players need to be able to perform with more speed and under greater pressure.
- Focus on individual deficiencies.
- Focus on overall body development: proper warm-up and cool down.
- Possession games: 4v2; 5v2; 5v3.
- Players should understand the various positions on the field.
- Players should gain an understanding of the style of play.
- Players should gain a deeper understanding of re-starts.

Each session ends with small sided games to goals.

Age Group Specific Areas of Focus

Technical:

- Continue training the technical aspects of the game.
- Continued Coerver training.
- 5v2 possession games.
- 5v3 possession games.
- Attacking 1v1 situations to goal.
- Attacking 2v1 situations. Wall pass, overlap and take-over combinations.
- Attack vs. defense focusing on width and crosses.
- Defense vs. attack focusing on the build-up out of the back.
- Heading
- Movement off the ball. When and where to run.
- Players need to understand positional play.

Tactical:

- Understanding re-start situations.
- A better understanding of team offense and team defense.
- A better understanding of team play through combinations, positional play and positional inter-change.

Conditioning:

- General running training.
- Overall body movement training.
- Appropriate training for endurance, power and speed.
- Interval training.

Staff Objectives:

- The U12 player should be able to pass and receive.
- The U12 player should be able to dribble, change directions, show different moves.
- The U12 player should be comfortable in the 5v2 possession game.
- The U12 player should be able to play one and two-touch soccer.

- The U12 player should be able to understand the principles of movement off the ball and checking to the ball.
- The U12 player should be able to find the open player.

Consider This:

At the latter stages of the youth level (U-11 through U-12), the goal is to provide training and game environments that promote the continued growth of ball skill, an increased game awareness, and an appreciation for taking calculated risks in the attack through the 3 v 3 to 9 v 9 (U-12) game model, all in an environment that the players enjoy. The small-sided game model is an effective method for developing ball skill and game awareness because it increases opportunities for players to have contact with the ball and to both attack and defend without the tactical regimentation that can occur in 11 v 11 soccer.

Characteristics of Soccer Players at this Age

- They begin to develop the abilities to sustain complex, coordinated skill sequences.
- Some of the players have reached puberty. Girls, in general, arrive earlier than boys.
- Most players are able to think abstractly and are thus able to understand some team concepts that are foundational to the game.
- They are beginning to be able to address hypothetical situations, and to solve problems systematically.
- They are spending more time with friends and less time with their parents. They are susceptible to conformity to peer pressure.
- Players tend to be highly self-critical. Instruction needs to be enabling. Show them what can be done instead of telling them what not to do.
- Although they are more serious with their play, they are still mainly involved because it is fun.
- They are openly competitive. A few may foul on purpose.
- They are looking towards their role models and heroes in order to know how to act.
- They have a more complex and developed sense of humor.

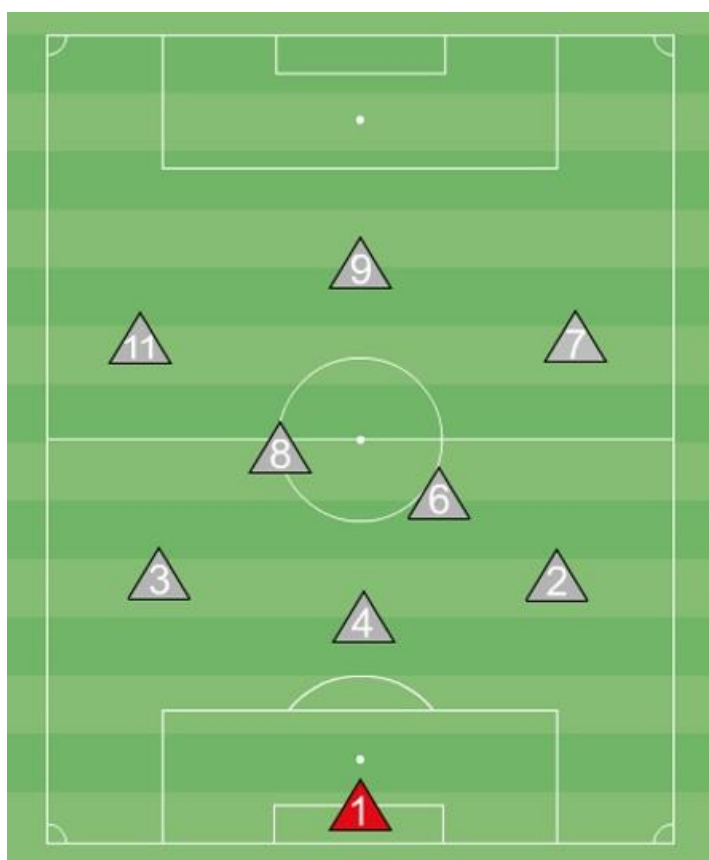
Things to expect:

Games are still frantically paced and a bit unpredictable for the most part. These players know how much fun it is to play the game skillfully. As a result, we begin to see some of the players drop out who recognize the importance of skill and become discouraged with their lack of it. Some other things that we can expect when working with this aged player are:

- They will yell at their teammates when they make a mistake.
- They will openly question the referee's decisions.

- Players will encourage each other.
- They will pass the ball even when they know that they will not get it back.
- Team cooperation is emerging. They will run to a spot, away from the play, even when they know that they might not get the ball.
- They will point out inconsistencies between what you say and what you do. They are “moral watchdogs”.
- The difference in skill levels between the players is very pronounced.
- Some players might be as big as you are, some might be half your size.
- They will get together with their friends and be able to set up and play their own game.

US Soccer PDI: Formations for 9v9 play



9v9 Formations: U11 & U12

The **1-3-2-3** and **1-3-3-2** organizations are playing systems that should allow players to connect through lines. Players should be aware of the roles of the individuals in two connecting lines. The players should be fluid in mobility between lines on both attack and defense and recognize those roles in transition.

In attack, emphasis should be on spreading out, triangulating between lines, creating 2v1 and 1v1 situations and penetrating between lines.

Defensively continue to emphasize compactness, outnumbering of the opponent with the ball and providing cover to the pressing defender or defenders and consistently getting numbers behind the ball.

Preferred Formation:

3-2-3

This formation best prepares players to move on to a 4-3-3 formation once they get to 11v11. Like the 4-3-3 this system can have many variations such as a **3-2-2-1** for example. It provides good height and width and highlights the importance of distribution from the central areas of the field. The space out wide is obvious so it is also a good system when encouraging defenders to go forward and join the attack and wingers when to track back and support the two center midfielder.

Optional:

3-3-2 (3-3-1-1)

This system is similar to a 4-4-2 formation. This formation provides good balance between attack and defense. Midfields can get forward and create overloads with the two forwards as can a defender come up into midfield either wide or centrally. The flexibility of this system makes it very useful when you want to start deeper and encourage your players to get forward which is a lot easier than the other way around.

Technical Development Areas of Focus for 13 – 14 Year Olds

- Improving the technical aspects of the game under increased pressure.
- Players should gain a deeper understanding of tactical concepts: Offensive and defensive principles, high vs. low pressure, counter attack, off-side trap, etc.
- Improving the quality of play.
- Players need to continue their overall body development.
- Players need to gain a deeper understanding of their specific roles within the team.
- Players need to be able to recognize and make tactical adjustments within the game.

The main areas of focus: developing tactical concepts of the game while continuing to develop technical abilities. Training sessions will be similar from the previous stage with the areas of focus becoming more complex.

Formation & Style of Play

- Players will learn to play in various formations: 4-3-3, 4-5-1, 4-4-2, etc.
- Players will learn to play an Attacking/Possession based style of soccer.

Attacking Shape

- Width & Depth
- Off the ball movement
- Ball Movement / Pattern Play
- Various ways to attack

Different ways of attack

- Down the flank
- Weak side
- Outside to the middle
- Crossing & finishing
- Combination play to goal
- Counter attack
- 1v1 to goal

Defensive Shape

- Pressure, cover, & balance
- Defending from front line to the back line
- Areas to force the ball
- Delay / Recover

Defending as team

- Defensive Shape
- Pressure, cover, and balance
- Zonal Defending
- Defending from the front to the back
- Pressing as a team
- How to delay and recover as a team
- Line of confrontation
- Using offsides & spacing to aid in defense

Age Group Specific Areas of Focus

Technical:

- Improve on technical deficiencies.
- Continued training on 1v1 attacking and defending techniques.
- Technical training under game conditions.
- Possession games with conditions to add pressure.
- Building out of the back.
- Midfield play.
- Offense vs. defense.
- Wing play and crosses.
- Defending as a group, as a team.
- Play in the final third of the field.
- Passes into a target.
- Rhythm of play.

Tactical:

- Being able to make tactical adjustments according to weather conditions, field conditions, opponents and game situations.
- Team tactics in respect to defense and offense. High pressure vs. low pressure. Man for man vs. zone. Creating numbers up situations.
- Chalk talks.
- Video sessions.

Conditioning:

- Specific strength training.
- Specific speed training.
- Specific endurance training.

Staff Objectives:

- The U14 player should be able to play one and two-touch soccer.
- The U14 player should be confident in the 1v1 duel, both defensively, as well as offensively.
- The U14 player should understand the concepts and purpose of possession games.
- The U14 player should show tactical understanding of defensive and attacking concepts.
- The U14 player should show a willingness to work individually on deficiencies.

Technical Development Areas of Focus for 15 – 18 Year Olds

- Continue fine-tuning the technical aspects of the game.
- Players should be getting familiar with pattern play.
- Players should train on individual technical and tactical functions of the game.
- Game analysis and game specific training.
- Continue to develop the strength, speed and fitness aspects of the game.

The final phase of player preparation aims to maximize player performance in all aspects of the game. A player's capacities are becoming fully established while training to peak for major competitions. Training is characterized by high intensity and relatively high volume with frequent periods of rest.

Areas of Focus in addition to Training to Compete Phase

- Ability to improvise within game situations
- Independent decision-making

- Further development and refinement of soccer specific skills
- Automatic and consistent performance of soccer specific skills
- Development of effective competition strategies and ability to adjust within games
- Successful tactics, strategies, and necessary variations needed to win games
- The importance of variation/options on set-pieces in attack & defense
- Maintenance of physical capabilities with the view of maximizing performance
- Well-developed, refined and individualized mental skills and routines
- Frequent prophylactic (preventative) breaks

Age Group Specific Areas of Focus

Technical:

- Fine tuning the technical elements of the game under match conditions.
- Training should be with speed under pressure.
- Continued improvement in the 1v1 duels.
- Specific individual training for attackers, midfielders and defenders.
- Possession games.
- Building out of the back.
- Midfield play.
- Team defense.
- Crosses.

Tactical:

- Being able to play from different formations.
- Seeing out the result.
- Rhythm of play.
- Players need to be able to analyze their own play.
- Players need to be able to deal with individual and group criticism.

Conditioning:

- Continued specific endurance, speed, strength and power training.
- Players should try to reach their peak performance level.

General Thoughts About This Age :

By 15 and 16 years old, players should be comfortable dealing with the ball in a variety of situations. With this in mind, the coach should look to address several issues over the course of the two year cycle that address how basic tactical issues can influence the game:

1. Small group ideas on both sides of the ball (Moving forward together on the attack (staying connected), realistic pressure, and how to help your team win the ball back).
2. How the small group ideas tie into larger team concepts. Such as the similarities and differences between high and low pressure, keeping your back line connected with your attacking players during possession in your attacking half of the field, or rhythm of play issues (when to speed up and when to slow down).
3. Some basic positional responsibilities and how, as a team, these responsibilities are interconnected. For example, how the backs share defensive responsibilities, how decisions that the defending line makes are related to the decisions of the players in front of them, or the role of the holding midfielder in your team's possession.
4. Accountability for their execution and decisions with the ball. Players at this age must aspire to have technical precision. Players need to be made aware of how their ability to collect and pass the ball has a direct impact on all aspects of the game.

Note: These concepts and goals are all based on the assumption that the players are good enough with the ball to be able to begin dealing with this next level of soccer. If they do not possess the requisite skills to begin taking on these new challenges, it is the responsibility of the coach to make sure they continue to work on the tools that they lack.

Goals for Practice, Games and Season

At the U-16 age coaches should continue to address principles and themes of the game in generic situations i.e., not position-based, as well as in functional (positional) scenarios. Coaches can set up small-sided games to multiple goals where players and teams (of 6's or 7's) are dealing with pretty tight spaces, but with several goals. Defensively the players and teams are focusing on getting pressure to the ball so that they limit the number of goals that they need to actively defend. As these principles are being addressed, it should begin to make some sense to the players how to translate these concepts into team issues, such as how the backs work together in different parts of the field or the relationship between the different lines of the team (defenders and midfielders, midfielders and forwards, etc.). Creating games where these larger team issues are introduced,

experienced and discussed is also important at this age. Practices should always contain the following elements: competition, critical thinking and technical repetition. At this age, the physical (fitness) side of the game begins to play a larger role than before. Practices and matches should continue to focus on improving the players' understanding of the tactical issues, such as how to control the rhythm of the game, as well as getting the group working not only functionally within the group but also as 11 players moving together on both sides of the ball. Some time should also be spent addressing how players and the team manage the game. Not only in terms of executing the game plan, but how to address different scenarios such as playing in the final 15 or 20 minutes of a game with a lead, when the game is tied, or when your team is losing. Players must be challenged every day to solve soccer problems. They must be held accountable for their decisions and their performance. These players are ready for an increased level of problem solving that focuses on using their soccer mind and not just their physical attributes. 17- and 18- year-old players playing against more skillful teams or older teams on a regular basis will help their development. Keep in mind that these older players should be better soccer players and not just better athletes. There should be a continued emphasis on professional attitude including game preparation, on and off field behavior, work ethic, individual fitness, dealing with health and preventative issues of health, and spending time on technical issues to keep sharp.

General Description of What Should be Happening During Practice

Players at these ages still need to learn by experiencing the game. The majority of the game should still be taught by putting the players in realistic soccer environments and allowing them to feel their way through the challenges that the game presents to them. As much as possible, these concepts and themes should be taught in competitions where the games or exercises end with a winning and a losing team.

All aspects of practice should involve player accountability. As mentioned earlier, U-18 players will benefit from:

1. Generic, non-functional exercises that emphasize principles of the game.
2. More specific, functional exercises that address working together within a "line" of the team or between "lines" of the team toward some soccer objective. Non-functional, principle-based games address themes of the game through a variety of small-sided games that challenge the players to recognize these themes in less "structured" environments. An example of a generic, "principle-based" exercise is the 6 v 6 game with bumper players on the side and end lines of the field which can be used to address group defending, possession, speed of play, etc. The emphasis of the exercise can be manipulated by the conditions and the rules. This one game can be played with no goals as a keep away game, with end line targets to address rhythm of play as well as group and team defending and with big goals to focus on attacking and defending issues that are created with big goals and goal keepers. All the while, the bumper players offer outlet options while allowing the field space to remain relatively tight. In this example, most of the coach's teaching can be done as the ball is rolling or when the ball has gone out of bounds. Another way for the

coach to influence these exercises is to play several games with a certain time limit for each game and discuss and make adjustments between games or play a longer game with a 5-minute half time. This model is beneficial because it is closer to how we coach in matches and it allows the players an uninterrupted amount of time to sort out the game for themselves. The most common example of a functional exercise at this level is some type of half field or three quarter sized field game that has one full sized goal and two “counter” goals. These exercises are beneficial because the coach can address specific scenarios, as they would occur in specific parts of the field during a match. They also provide the coach and players with repeated opportunities to practice a particular issue. Finally, these exercises are a good way to address team issues when the size of your roster doesn’t allow you to play 11 v 11. For example, attacking and defending themes can be addressed beginning with 6 v 5 (4 defenders and a goalkeeper) and continuing to the full game. There are several points to consider that may impact the effectiveness of these exercises.

3. Even though there are typically uneven numbers and a partial field with one full goal, try to make the soccer as realistic and competitive as possible. Make sure that the amount of information that you give is balanced by uninterrupted opportunities for the players to play. This means that, occasionally, you need to allow the game to play for a certain amount of time, allowing for some change of possession as well as restarts, etc.
4. Try to work with both groups somewhat equally. If you are designing this exercise to work with your attacking group going to a big goal, have your assistant coach address issues with the defending group such as establishing a point in their defending half to “recover” to when they are able to get the ball out of their end. Likewise, they can work on when to step and pressure and when to drop off and how to keep their back line active, and within the back line – what is the position of their bodies and how can this influence their ability to defend? These can all be addressed while the attacking team is also focusing on their own issues.

General Description of What Should be Happening in Matches

The matches should be an extension of the themes that are being addressed on a daily and weekly basis. There should be an awareness by the players and a discussion prompted by the coach about performance based on the players’ ability to recognize themes during the game, and the players’ technical ability to act on what they see. Most of the coach’s role in the match occurred during the prior week. By game time, the coach’s role is to give the players some organizational focus during the pre-game period and then make the appropriate adjustments during the match through substitutions and during the halftime break.

General Description of Information That is Communicated to the Players

Charismatic. Experienced. Knowledgeable. Articulate. Disciplinarian. Managerial know how. Thoughtful persuader. An understanding of the 3 lines of the team and how each works as a separate unit as well as part of the team as a whole.

Final Suggestions for the Coach

- When communicating with the players be positive, keep it simple and be specific.
- When communicating with the players, make eye contact with each player.
- Speak in a calm voice.
- Let the players make decisions during the game. Provide input at natural stoppages and at half time.
- In general, the majority of game feedback should be given at the next training session with the team.

Best Qualities of a Coach for This Age Player

Charismatic; well informed; up to date; experienced; knowledgeable; articulate; disciplinarian; no doubts about his/her authority and managerial know-how.

11v11 – Preferred Formation:

The **4-3-3** and its variations of **4-1-2-3**, **4-2-3-1** or **4-5-1** are the most common systems of play today. This formation provides 9 players behind the ball when defending and multiple options for how to support your forward(s) when attacking. The wingers can stay wide and high or track back, or one tracks and one does not. This can either give you more cover or make you more dangerous when in transition when you win the ball. This formation and its variations provide varying levels (based on variation) of protection for your two central defenders. As with the 4-4-2, the outside defenders can act as attacking wide midfielders when the team is in possession to support the center midfielders and wingers.

Optional:

The **4-4-2** is traditionally one of the most common systems played. The formation provides eight players behind the ball when defending and four players ready to support the two forwards when attacking. The two wide midfielders are used as wingers, providing automatic width to the midfield shape. The use of four defenders adds more compactness and balance in the back. Either the sweeper (U10 or younger) or the flat back four system can be utilized.

Roles and Responsibilities of Each Position Within a 4-3-3

#9 – Center Forward: Target or False Nine Target: Play High, Hold Up Play, Link to MF False Nine: Drop into MF as an ACM at times

#11/7 – Wingers – Good 1v1 taking players on, provide width and overloads, quality service from wide, stretch defenses at times – defensively: force play central, double back wide

#10 – Attacking Playmaker (Maestro), Dangerous passer, link backs to Forwards, Stop counters, combine to get forward, good 1v1 players, defensively – stop counters, force opponent to play to specific parts of the field to recover ball

#8 – Center Midfielder – box to box player, can play defensively (double pivot) or higher up the field as another attacking center mid (single pivot). High quality passer, high soccer IQ to unbalance defenses, control tempo/rhythm

#6 – Defensive/Holding Midfielder – link backs to midfield, control tempo/rhythm, play outside backs into game, wide range of passing abilities, solid 1v1 defender, stop counters, distribute

#3/2 – Outside Backs – provide width in attack, combine to get forward, link to 6, 8, 10, 9, 7/11, change point of attack, get up and down the flank

#5/4 – Center Backs – high quality technically, able to keep possession in numbers up situations, confident to play out of back, stay connected to one another

#1 – GK – play off line, always an option to reset attack, high quality of passing with both feet myriad distances, confident on the ball, typical keeper duties (shot stopping, distribution, organization), vocal organizer.

Development of Goalkeepers

The implementation of goalkeepers within youth soccer is an issue that creates considerable discussion among coaches. Restricting a player to the position of goalkeeper at too early of an age may have a negative effect and eliminate them from future participation in soccer

Children grow at different rates and times. It is impossible to predict who will develop into the best goalkeeper when they are ten. Early selection as a goalkeeper may not be in the player's best long-term interest.

Development of a goalkeeper must be carefully monitored and conducted. The progressive teaching of technical skills is important given the concerns for safety within the position.

Last line of defense – first line of attack.

More than ever before, modern goalkeepers cannot detach themselves from the game. They have become vital elements of the attack as well as their more traditional role as the last defensive stand. They must be accurate passers of the ball during distribution, reliable receivers of the ball under pressure and even show deftness at heading when clearing errant back passes.

This means that the youth goalkeeper must be competent in field skills. Most goalkeeping skills are specific to the position (catching low, medium and high balls, diving, throwing). Older players are more likely to embrace goalkeeping as a more or less permanent role. How well these players incorporate the physical and mental skills of both field player and goalkeeper will determine the true effectiveness of their jobs as the first line of attack and the last line of defense.

Consider This:

- Players at the U-10 level and older should be encouraged, not forced, to be exposed to goalkeeping roles in practice. Many players develop goalkeeping skills at older ages. Exposing many players at U-10 and U-12 to the position could help identify a hidden talent. Further, exposure to the rigors of goalkeeping may help field players understand the difficulty of the position.
- Goalkeeping should become an active part of every practice. Unfortunately, many coaches incorrectly set up practices where goalkeepers work mostly by themselves and call on them only for shooting exercises. Goalkeepers should be used early in practice in technical development with the ball at their feet, and either as targets or in their primary role in front of the net to solidify their importance. They should not only play as shot blockers and distributors of the ball, but as active communication links with the rest of the team.
- The role of the goalkeeper needs to move beyond that of a shot blocker during shooting practice. Coaches should permit goalkeepers to distribute the ball, which increases their decision-making and communication abilities. The goalkeeper's offensive role should develop in concert with their defensive role.
- Be Active. Concentration by the goalkeeper is vitally important to their effectiveness. Goalkeepers who stay on their line or who are not attached to the rest of the team will soon be reacting to a desperate situation instead of a relatively safe one. Encouraging goalkeepers to be involved and ready goes a long way in reducing dangerous situations.
- Goalkeeping is a tough job. Much is expected of goalkeepers, but they receive very little praise. In many ways, goalkeepers are subject to open and unforgiving exposure. Mistakes are clearly showcased and become very personalized, and psychologically deflating. Mistakes will be made. Encouragement and understanding mixed with sound coaching advice will go a long way in creating a stimulating playing environment.
- When to begin as a goalkeeper is a question asked by many coaches. The authors believe that initiating goalkeeping in games prior to age nine is inappropriate. Children should be exposed to body movements

that simulate what goalkeepers do, but to put them under the pressure of being a goalkeeper before they have developed some basic psychomotor and cognitive skills is inappropriate.

Recommendations:

- U-6: No GK required for 3 v 3 games. No GK required for 4 v 4 games.
- U-8: No GK required for 4 v 4 games.
- U-10: GK is included within team – rotate players as GK.
- U-12: GKs identified within team – GKs share time but in order of priority, which is determined by the coach.
- U-14: GK chosen on ability and contribution to the team.

Differences Between Coaching Boys and Girls

The major difference between coaching boys soccer versus coaching girls soccer is not the training sessions, but the different social and psychological factors.

Coaching Boys Soccer

- Intense Motivational Techniques work well
- Coach should focus on the individuals rather than the team.
- Encouragement is not always expected.
- More distance relationship between the coach and players

Coaching Girls Soccer

- People oriented, democratic approach works best
- Coach should focus on the relationships among players
- Encouragement from the coach is a necessity
- More interaction between coach and players

Drills versus Game/Activities

Drills are generally an absence of thought. An individual repeats the same movement or patterns exactly the same way each time. This approach with regard to youth soccer has several limitations. During a soccer game the environment is constantly changing, therefore activities must also reflect this ever changing competitive environment. Children are drawn to games and activities like opposite poles of a magnet, whereas drills repel them and decrease their interest. A game/activity approach creates an environment that allows technique, tactics, fitness and creativity to develop in harmony. Which do you think best fits the developmental needs of children?

Learning Through Game/Activities

Characteristics of Drills

- Static
- Militaristic
- Lines
- Boring
- No Thought
- Age Inappropriate

Characteristics of Games/Activities

- Dynamic
- Organized but unstructured
- Free Movement
- Fun
- Decision Making
- Age Appropriate

The embedded method of teaching physical skills or games involves a brief introduction and demonstration, a warm-up and stretching period, organization of instructional groups, practicing and repeating specific sport techniques, intermittent verbal cues or demonstration, and concludes with “the game.” This approach, although efficient from an organizational perspective, may not be the most effective. What has been lacking are the opportunities for players to practice the various techniques in the context of the actual game.

Team sports present a dynamic and unpredictable environment. To isolate specific techniques is unwise since technique is useless without the dynamics of time, space, decision-making, and teammate/opponent movements.

Evolving Coaches, Evolving Players

In order to affect change on the players a shift in coaching methodology may need to take place. The development of creative, intuitive players is greatly impacted by coaching style and demands. When conducting training sessions, there needs to be a greater reliance on game oriented training that is player centered and enables players to explore and arrive at solutions while they play. This is in contrast to the “coach centered” training that has been the mainstay of coaching methodology over the years.

Game Centered Training Defined

“Game centered training” implies that the primary training environment is the game as opposed to training players in “drill” type environments. This is not to say that there is not a time for a more “direct” approach to coaching. At times, players need more guidance and direction as they are developing. However, if the goal is to develop creative players who have the abilities to solve problems, and interpret game situations by themselves, a “guided discovery” approach needs to be employed. This approach taps in to certain essentials that are always present within the team. Players want to play and enjoy playing the game first and foremost. Since the “game” is used in training, this allows for players to be comfortable with the pace, duration, and physical and mental demands that the game provides. The reason why the players play is because they enjoy the game. They have a passion for the game. This is where they find and express their joy and creativity.

Game

- This is what the players actually face during competition. It is 100% realistic.
- Therefore, the players are more competent at transferring what they have learned in training to the game itself.
- Game Experience = 100% of Training Time
- Many “drills” are not realistic. Therefore, players find it difficult to transfer the things learned in “drill” environments to the game itself.
- Game Experience = ?% of Training Time
- This is not to say that “drills” that closely replicate one aspect of the game should not be used in training. Dynamic, demanding, “drill” environments, used at the beginning of the training times, often prepares the players to play the game as it breaks down the more complicated “picture” that the game provides in to manageable pieces. However, care must be given to making sure that the “drill” is active, and mirrors the demands found in the game.

Continuous Play in Training

- Reflects the real game.

- Demands rhythm. The players can not go “all out” for an entire 90-minute stretch. They need to know how to control the rhythm of the game so that they can last the entire time.
- Demands focus. Players must stay focused for lengths of time, just like they need to do during the game.
- In order to have continuous play during training, the coach must coach “in the flow” of the game, and not interrupt play with stoppages to make coaching points.

Feedback on the Field

- Coaching “in the flow” provides immediate feedback for the players.
- Feedback applies to the real game and is therefore directly beneficial to the players.
- Allows continuous play.

Eliminating lines, laps and lectures means:

- Having players stand in lines waiting for their turn generally indicates an inappropriate activity. If players are standing and not moving the activity will not keep their interest.
- Running laps, especially without a ball, is a waste of time. All practice activities should take place on the field, preferably with a ball.
- Lectures should be left for the classroom. Children come to practice to be active and participate, not to be talked to for extended periods of time.

Often, coaches design activities that focus on determining a winner. These activities typically involve elements that lead to players being eliminated from the activity. Those eliminated first are players who usually need the most work on technique and decision-making. Design activities that keep all players engaged throughout the length of the activity. Eliminate elimination games!!

Punishment

The use of physical activity such as laps, push-ups, sit-ups etc., as punishment for misbehavior is an inappropriate method of discipline. Players will come to believe that physical training is actually a form of punishment. Players need to understand the importance of fitness and making them run when there is a behavior problem is counter to what you want to develop. When the consequences warrant, short-term exclusion from the activity will often get a positive result.

Coach’s Role In the player centered approach

- Focus is the Player

- Creates a challenging game environment
- Provides options
- Asks players what they think
- Develops Players In the “command style:”
- Focus is the Coach
- Creates exercises and directs session
- Provides solutions
- Tells players what to think
- Develops Clones Player’s

Role In the player centered approach

- Primarily learn from playing the game
- Focus = Playing
- Solve Soccer Problems

In the “command style”

- Primarily learn from the coach
- Focus = Coach’s Expectations
- Execute coach’s direction

The goal of all of this preparation is to produce players that

- Are instinctive
- Are creative
- Take initiative
- Express individuality
- Think independently
- Understand options
- Solve problems
- “Own the game”

Technical Needs

What follows is a list of technical needs that have been derived from observations of National Team players playing at the Senior and Youth National Team levels:

- Receiving and Solving Pressure Individually

- Passing (Full “Bag of Clubs”)
- 1v1, Dynamic Attacking Players
- Flank Service
- Finishing Solving Pressure Individually:
- Receiving
- 1st Touch
- Next Several Touches to Free Player from Pressure

Training: Small Sided Games Requiring Multiple Touches in Tight Spaces Passing → Penetration:

- Types of Passes:
- Chipped
- Bent
- Driven

Training: Small Sided Games with Restraining Lines (5 v 5 + 2)

- Training: 11 v 11 with Restraining Lines 30 Yards from each Goal
- Must Penetrate Restraining Line with a Pass 1v1 ?

Penetration:

- Developing Instinctive 1v1 Players – Brazilian Street Soccer
- Small Sided – Small Goals
- Even Numbers
- Tight Spaces
- Unlimited Touches Flank Service: (Norway)
- Types of Flank Service
- Driven Low → Near Post
- Driven High → Center or Back Post
- Chipped to Back Post
- Curled behind back four and bending away from the goalkeeper
- Pulled Back → 12 and Near Post

Training: Repetitions to each specific spot

- Flank Play Games Finishing: (Germany, Sweden, Norway)
- Placement Finishing: Bending, Chipping, Volleys

Types of Finishing

- Breakaways
- 1 Touch from Flank Service
- 1 Touch in a Crowded Penalty Box
- Shots > 18
- Finishing a Higher Percentage of Shots

Tactical Needs Attacking Play

- Possession vs. Penetration
- Counter Attack
- When to Play Direct vs. Indirect
- Reading the Opponent's Numbers
- Making Decisions regarding Direction and Speed of Play

Penetration in the Final Third

- Attacking Diversity
- 1v1
- Combination Play
- Penetration Passing
- Flank Play
- End line Service
- Early Service
- Shots > 18
- Training: Games with Restraining Lines: 18-35 yards from Goals Team Defending
- Individual defending w/in team concept
- Zonal defending
- "Pressing"
- Variety of lines of confrontation

Fitness Philosophy

- Critical component of the game.
- All fitness at U8-U14 should be accomplished from playing the game.

- Short rounds of high intensity provide a realistic fitness model for soccer.
- Will continue to have an impact on player selection but no more than technique, tactics or mentality.

Stretching Philosophy

- Stretching at the Pre-pubescent age groups is not necessary.
- Pre Training/Game (Adolescent age groups): Dynamic stretching, incorporate a ball if possible! No static stretching.
- Post Training/Game (Adolescent age groups): Static stretches after the bout of activity will help reduce risk of injury and improve flexibility.
- Stretching is an important part of any training session or game. Taking time to stretch before and after exertion will help prevent injury and get your players warmed up.

Responsibilities of SSFC Team Coaches

Safety

- Your first responsibility is the health and safety of all participants.
- All South Shore Futbol Training coaches must become certified in basic first aid and concussion training.
- Be prepared to handle First Aid situations as well as medical emergencies at all practices and games.
- Know and understand the Laws of the Game.
- Inspect equipment and field conditions for safety reasons.
- Utilize proper teaching and instruction of players regarding safe techniques and methods of play.
- Implement appropriate training programs to make sure players are fit for practice and competition.
- Supervise and control your players so as to avoid injury situations.
- Part of the player safety also includes hydration and dealing with extreme heat.

Player Development

- Attend all practices and games.
- Focus is mainly on 'player centered' development.
- Develop the players' appreciation of the game.
- Keep winning and losing in proper perspective.
- Be sensitive to each player's developmental needs.
- Educate the players to the technical, tactical, physical and psychological demands of the game.

- Allow players to experience different roles on the field.
- Players need to have fun and receive feedback.
- Practice should be conducted in the spirit of enjoyment and learning.
- Strive to help each player reach his or her full potential and be prepared to move to the next level.

Ethics

- Strive to maintain integrity within our sport.
- Know and follow all the rules and policies set forth by club, league, state and national associations.
- Work in the spirit of cooperation to provide the players with the maximum opportunity to develop.
- Be a positive role model.
- Set the standard for sportsmanship.
- Keep sport in proper perspective.
- Encourage moral and social responsibility.
- Continue your own soccer education!

Admin

- Check your club email at least once a day.
- Insuring that team parent volunteers have been appointed.
- Work with team manager to provide game/training reminders, online links to schedules.
- Preparing and bringing team rosters and players cards for games.
- Reporting game scores to the league after each game.
- Making arrangements for cover at practices and games to go on in his/her absence.
- Notify the club Director of any games that you will miss.
- Coordinate with the club registrar and bookkeeper when adding or removing players from your team mid-season.
- Send out two monthly team updates to parents that include game analysis, what the team has been working on at training and what topics you will cover next. This should not take more than ten minutes to write, be brief.
- Provide an end of Fall/mid-season review (or Winter season for HS ages) for the parents.
- Evaluating all players at seasons end and submitting the evaluations to the players and club Director.

Additional

- Follow guidelines established by the club.
- Communicate our goals and policies to players and parents.

- Coaches are encouraged to obtain the highest level of training possible.
- Coaches should be familiar with the other teams and coaches in their age group.
- Attend coaches' meetings and events.
- Be organized.
- Encourage player, and parent participation in club-sponsored activities and events.
- Controlling the behavior of parents at games and reporting any incidents of bad behavior to the club Director.

Parent Interaction

Parents are a crucial part of youth soccer teams. They can be a major positive factor in every player's development. It is very important to view parents as a part of your team that you will need supporting you and the team if you are going to maximize player development. Encourage parents to ask questions so they are not left drawing their own conclusions when they have questions. Most issues can be avoided by proactively informing parents. Educating the parents as you go will have a big impact on their overall experience and will get them buy-in to what you are doing with the team.

Team Formation Meeting –SSFC teams (Preseason)

- Introduce yourself and start getting to know the parents.
- Objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address are:
- Choosing a team manager, someone to help with all of the details. This is time-saving and will allow you to focus on coaching rather than the administrative side of the team.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards, cleats or turfs.
- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching players. Stating these objectives clearly sets the stage for a successful season.
- What your expectations for them are during game time. This is not only for the players but the parents as well.
- Lastly, take the opportunity to see if anyone has questions for you.

Difficulty with one or more parents (In Season)

Some may want their child to play more while others may question your judgment as a coach. You can minimize the number of times you have to deal with an angry or upset parent by following these guidelines:

- Have a pre-season meeting before the first practice to discuss your plans and expectations for the season. Encourage questions from the parents and let them know about your style within the structure of the clubs methodology.
- Express appreciation for their interest, concern and time. This will make them more open and at ease with you.
- Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement.
- Know what your objectives are and do what you believe to be of value to the team. No coach can please everyone!
- Know the club's policies. Be prepared to follow and explain them to parents.
- Handle any confrontation one-on-one and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Let the parent talk while you listen. Often a parent will vent their frustrations just by talking.
- Don't discuss individual players with other parents. The grapevine will hang you every time. Show the same respect for each player on the team that you want the parents to show toward you.
- Be consistent! If you change a rule or philosophy during the season, you may be in for trouble. At the very least, inform players and parents of any change as soon as possible.
- Most importantly, be fair and respectful! If you treat all your players fairly and equally you will gain their trust as well as their parents respect.

SSFC Player Responsibilities

- Players should be on time for practices and games. (45 minutes prior to game time).
- Players should be respectful towards their teammates, coach, opponents, officials and parents.
- You represent yourself, your team and your club. Show pride.
- Practice the way you would play in a real game.
- Take care of your body. Eat healthy. Drink plenty of fluids.
- Do not blame teammates in practices or games. Everyone makes mistakes. Work harder to make up for others mistakes.
- Give your best at all times. Even when things are not working out as well as expected.
- Play as a team. Share the ball with your teammates. Do not play selfish.
- Practices are mandatory. If you have to miss, contact your coach in advance.
- In general, you earn your playing time through your practice performance.

Coaching Tips

- Do not put too much emphasis on the game results. Patience is key. Focus on the performance.
- When your team steps on the field they should do everything possible to win the game, however, your emphasis should be on the quality of play.
- Set individual and team goals. Also, periodically, sit down with the individual player to discuss their progress.
- As a youth coach, encourage your player to play at the highest level.
- Allow players to play in different positions on your team.
- Encourage your best players to play in demanding positions.
- Encourage players to attend extra training.
- Have organized practices, which are fun, challenging and competitive.
- The key to your practices should be repetitions of the fundamentals, however, try to present these exercises in different variations through games/activities.
- Be excited about the game. If you are excited, the players will follow suit.
- The players' soccer enjoyment is first and foremost.
- The players have to understand how the practice relates to the game.
- As a coach you have to create the right environment for training.
- Create a competitive, challenging atmosphere in which positive encouragement and feedback is an important part. As coaches, we should be committed to creating and delivering the best possible session we can. Across the state, your opponents are training as well, is your session better than theirs?
- Players must have ownership over their training sessions. Being responsible for bringing a pumped up ball, coaching each other as they play, giving their best and competing as best they can are all requirements at training.