



Northern Lights Player Competency Matrix

Below is a guide to player competency in various technical, tactical, mental and physical stages. This overview should provide coaches, and parents, a focused guide on nurturing children to achieve end of stage goals and attainment targets. The matrix provides benchmarks for performance. Competency is the relationship between skill, selection and application of skills, tactics, strategies and ideas and the readiness of body and mind to cope with the activity. The guide considers skill development as a progressive process – meaning, competency in basic skills must be achieved before progressing to more complex skills. The matrix guides coaches, and parents, to understand when it is appropriate to introduce players to a skill and when players should be expected to demonstrate a level of proficiency (competence)

The guide should help coaches, and parents, to know when players should be 'Introduced' (x) to a skill/concept and when players should be expected to demonstrate 'Competency' (+).

Players are all on different journeys to their own development. While some players might excel in certain areas earlier than others, this does not necessarily mean that they will develop into world class players. The same can be said for players who are behind their peers in various developmental aspects. The most important piece is that players are aware of areas they perform well in, need to improve on and have intrinsic motivation to improve outside of training.

| Stage of Development | Ages |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Initial | 6U-8U |
| Foundation | 9U-11U |
| Intermediate | 12U-14U |
| Advanced | 15U-17U |

| Stage of Development | Initial | | | Foundation | | | Intermediate | | | Advanced | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|---|---|------------|----|----|--------------|----|----|----------|----|----|
| Age in Years | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| ATTACKING - TECHNICAL | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Passing - 5 yd | X | | | | + | | | | | | | |
| Passing - 10 yd | | X | | | | + | | | | | | |
| Passing - 20 yd | | | X | | | | | + | | | | |
| Passing - Instep | | | X | | | | + | | | | | |
| Passing - Long pass | | | X | | | | | | + | | | |
| Passing - Chip/Lofted | | | | X | | | | | + | | | |
| Swerve pass - inside/outside of foot | | | | X | | | | | + | | | |
| Running with the ball | X | | | + | | | | | | | | |
| Dribbling - basic | | + | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dribbling - feints advanced | | X | | | + | | | | | | | |
| Turning moves - basic | X | | | + | | | | | | | | |
| Turning moves - advanced | | X | | | + | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| Shooting - Instep | X | | | | | + | | | | | | |
| Shooting - Half volley | | | X | | | | | + | | | | |
| Shooting - Volley | | | X | | | | | + | | | | |
| Shooting - 1v1 with GK | | | | | X | | | | + | | | |
| Ball control - foot | X | | | | | | + | | | | | |
| Receiving to turn | X | | | | | | + | | | | | |
| Ball control - thigh | | X | | | | | | + | | | | |
| Ball control - chest | | X | | | | | | + | | | | |
| Heading technique | | | | | | | X | | + | | | |
| Heading - defensive | | | | | | | X | | | + | | |
| Heading - attacking | | | | | | | X | | | + | | |
| 1v1 attacking | X | | | | | + | | | | | | |
| Shielding the ball | X | | | | | + | | | | | | |
| Crossing and finishing | | | | X | | | | | + | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| Support with and without the ball | | | X | | | | | | | + | | |
| Attacking from wide positions | | | | | X | | | | | | + | |
| Crossing balls into penalty box | | | | | X | | | | | | + | |
| Positional Play | | | X | | | | | | | | | + |

| Stage of Development | Initial | | | Foundation | | | Intermediate | | | Advanced | | |
|---|---------|---|---|------------|----|----|--------------|----|----|----------|----|----|
| Age in Years | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| TACTICAL - OUT OF POSSESSION | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Defending as an individual - marking | | | | | X | | | | | + | | |
| Defending as an individual 1v1 - pressure | X | | | | | | + | | | | | |
| Defending in pairs (2v1 and 2v2) - pressure and cover | | | X | | | | | | + | | | |
| Defending in small groups (3's and 4's) - pressure, cover and balance | | | | | | X | | | | | + | |
| Defending as a unit and team | | | | | | X | | | | | | + |
| Defending - tracking | X | | | | | | + | | | | | |
| Defending - switching places | | | | | X | | | | | + | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| Zonal Defending | | | | | X | | | | | | | + |
| Pressing | | | | | X | | | | | | | + |
| Compactness | | | | | | X | | | | | | + |

| Stage of Development | Initial | | | Foundation | | | Intermediate | | | Advanced | | |
|----------------------|---------|---|---|------------|----|----|--------------|----|----|----------|----|----|
| Age in Years | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| TACTICAL - IN TRANSITION | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Attacking - forward penetrating passes | | | | | X | | | | | | | + |
| Attacking - forward runs behind | | | | | | X | | | | | | + |
| Attacking - decision making | | X | | | | | | | | | | + |
| Defending - retreat behind ball | | | | X | | | | + | | | | |
| Defending - recovery runs to block/cover | | | | | | X | | | | + | | |
| Defending - pressing | | | | | X | | | | | | | + |
| Awareness of time, space, numbers | | | X | | | | | | | | | + |

| Stage of Development | Initial | | | Foundation | | | Intermediate | | | Advanced | | |
|----------------------|---------|---|---|------------|----|----|--------------|----|----|----------|----|----|
| Age in Years | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |

| Stage of Development | Initial | | | Foundation | | | Intermediate | | | Advanced | | |
|----------------------|---------|---|---|------------|----|----|--------------|----|----|----------|----|----|
| Age in Years | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| SET PIECES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kick off | X | | | | + | | | | | | | |
| Goal Kick | X | | | | | | + | | | | | |
| Throw In | X | | | | + | | | | | | | |
| Corner Kick | X | | | | | | | | + | | | |
| Direct Free Kick | X | | | | | | | | | | + | |
| Indirect Free Kick | X | | | | | | | | | | + | |
| Penalty Kick | X | | | | | | + | | | | | |

| Stage of Development | Initial | | | Foundation | | | Intermediate | | | Advanced | | |
|---------------------------|---------|---|---|------------|----|----|--------------|----|----|----------|----|----|
| Age in Years | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| GOALKEEPING | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Basic Catching Techniques | | | X | | | | + | | | | | |
| Positioning | | | | X | | | | + | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| Diving | | | | | X | | | | | | + | | |
| Distribution | | | | | X | | | | | | + | | |
| Advanced Techniques - crosses, punching, etc | | | | | | | X | | | | | | + |