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**STUDENTS IN 13-18 YEAR AGE-RANGE**

HOW TO ACHIEVE LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT IN SOCCER

**OVERVIEW**

Student-athletes in the 13-18 year range typically start in the “Train to Train” stage of Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD). This happens when the move from pre-teen to teen. As they mature and develop their athlete components, they move into the “Train to Compete” stage, when overtraining and recovery are even more important issues, and not approaching effectively can prevent proper development, and create chronic problems. The exact time at which players move from one stage to the next varies on speed of maturation.

When considering the Long-Term Athlete Development (“LTAD”) approach to teaching young athletes, this stage is a “Window of Optimal Trainability” for strength and stamina.

Through participation in The St. James FC Virginia program, student-athletes in the U13-18 age range will be exposed to learning environments, competition and classroom settings that address the following four (4) Components of the Game:

1. Psycho-Social
2. Physical
3. Technical
4. Tactical

Player development is very involved, and should be viewed as a marathon, not a sprint. Long-term, enduring success is the objective, over taking short cuts to win. Effective development leads to winning, and controlling winning more.

**U13 – U15 = Preparation Phase**

**General Characteristics:**

* Attention span is greatly lengthened
* Understands ethical and moral principles and decisions
* Enjoys praise and recognition and needs encouragement
* Able to understand and comprehend complex instruction
* A strong need to be accepted and a fear of ridicule
* A strong sense of self belonging
* Experiences physical changes - very concerned with their appearance and very self-conscience about their physical changes

**U13 – 15 Components of the Game:**

**Physical:**

Work on explosive power, vertical jump, body composition, plyometric

(jump) training, soccer-specific weight training, interval training, recovery

exercise and time off for rest, agility training with and without the ball, range of motion exercises especially during the warm-up and cool-down must include static stretching as well as light movement and proper nutrition and hydration. Training to reduce potential for injury, while enhancing performance.

**Technical:**

For field players: Continue to work on all technique throughout the season and begin to incorporate more complex skills, like chipping to score and bending shots; forward volley and side volley and defensive/attacking heading. Footwork and passing can never be too good.

For the goalkeepers: backwards diving, saving the breakaway, all forms of distribution, narrowing the angle and improve reaction saves.

**Tactical:**

For Field Players: Understands the overall tactics (principles of play) of the game and how to incorporate these into the flow of the match. Players in specific roles will start to assert themselves as leaders and will start to assist in directing play on the field. Understands and utilizes the principles or attack and defense as the game continually transitions. Understands how to play on, near and away from the ball in order to best support the attack (width and depth, mobility, creativity, playing for deliberate penetration in the effort to create goal scoring) and the defense (pressure, cover, balance, compactness, patience, low vs high pressure).

For goalkeepers: command back four to assist them in cutting out

passing lanes and space and to best win back possession.

**Psychological:**

Individual and group identities at this stage are important; this will assist the team and player in developing a style and system of play for a

consistent performance. With these identities, there will be some conflict; the coach needs to ensure there is a constant level of discipline. The expectations of this discipline needs to be mutually agreed upon, clear and fair, along with the expectations of the players and their roles and responsibilities. Leadership should also be a priority of the coach but the leadership should be positive and encouraging. If the player-leaders are negative their teammates will rebel and a distance will creep in amongst the team. Every player at this age should be afforded the opportunity to lead and be a team captain. To assist with developing leaders; teams should have discussions and team meetings. These discussions should be tactical achievements and thoughts as well as goal setting for individual and team. The coach should bring ideas up and let the team come to conclusions for themselves. The coach should not come up or make decisions in these discussions, and facilitate SMART goalsetting. The goals should be short term and long term and should be attainable and measured. These goals should be based on match results and should be the focus in training sessions.

**U16 – U18 = Commitment & Competition Phase**

**General Characteristics:**

• Attention span is greatly lengthened

• Understands ethical and moral principles and decision

• Enjoys praise and recognition and needs encouragement

• Able to understand and comprehend complex instruction

• A strong need to be accepted and a fear of ridicule

• A strong sense of self belonging

• Experiences physical changes - very concerned with their appearance and very self-conscience about their physical changes

• Often has a mindset of a child but the physical features of an adult

• Nearing growth maturation but still in need of physical growth

• Self-confidence will need molded

• Vulnerable (both emotionally and socially)

**Components of the Game:**

**Physical:**

Continue working on explosive power, vertical jump, body composition, plyometric (jump) training, soccer-specific weight training, interval training, recovery exercise and time off for rest, agility training with and without

the ball, range of motion exercises especially during the warm-up and cooldown must include static stretching as well as light movement and proper nutrition and hydration.

**Technical:**

For field players: Continue to work on all technique throughout the season and begin to demand techniques at match speed with pressures of time, space and opponents (at all times).

For the goalkeeper: all technical aspects should be completed at match speed with reading, timing, and agility aspects involved.

**Tactical:**

For field players: Should be able to apply the overall tactics and principles of play to all situations and incorporate these into the flow of the match. Able to demonstrate the Club’s style of play with little assistance and can incorporate at all levels of play (small sided to full game). Understands most all situations and how to play in those situations (i.e. numbers down in the defensive third on a breakaway).

For goalkeepers: support the attack from the defensive third and command the defensive third. Should organize defenders well in flow of play and on set plays.

**Psychological:**

Focus and concentration is increased and the ability to make fewer mental errors has decreased. Players will start playing with more self-confidence

and become self-motivated to become better for future potential.

Coaches should continue to review, teach, and convey the importance of the following:

* Managing emotions
* Managing behavior on and off the field
* Professionalism in conduct
* Dedication
* Commitment & loyalty
* Proper leadership
* Responsibility for actions (both on and off the field)
* Proper sportsmanship
* Team first
* Discipline
* Concentration
* Confidence
* Consistency
* Personal goal setting
* Respect for the game

**ADULT INFLUENCES ON PSYCHO-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Process Goal:** Build positive and enduring soccer culture for boys and girls, all ages and stages.

LEADING TRAINING & GAMES Select training activities, and plan/execute progression of activities in training that build skill, decision-making, and competence. (Read The Talent Code by Dan Coyle, and Teach Like a Champion by Doug Lemov)

LEADING THE INDIVIDUAL Provide positive and constructive feedback to all players, every practice and every game. (Read Sports Psych book by Colleen Hacker, Catch them Being Good)

LEADING TEAM Provide well timed coaching feedback in training/games that enhances group performance.

MANAGING PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT Provide transparent and helpful feedback to parents on their respective children, after games, and additionally as needed. Communicate, collaborate, & plan with other coaches, staff and directors. (Read Mindset by Carol Dweck)

LEADING SELF Reflect and improve, demonstrate Growth Mindset, teach it, have your own growth plans.

**Quality Control Aim:** Teach club philosophy and style of play.

**Keys to Learning:**

* Ensure that FUN is part of what is included every day, even professionals feel that fun is part of what motivates and engages short and long-term. (Visek FUN Maps study)
* Provide unconditional support to each student-athlete – providing positive feedback in some way, every session.
* Teaching laws of the game, age-appropriate game management.
* Coach with details of how, to improve tech, where, when, why, who, what! (The W’s)
* Teach and set standards.
* Help develop character, responsibility, core values – which affect both training and games.
* Promote learning, enjoyment and confidence.

**TECHNICAL-TACTICAL TRAINING PRIORITIES = Guides Content for Training**

* Complete ball control (ground and air), skill and ability to deal tech-tac with tight space.
* Heading techniques in defense and attack.
* Movement off-the-ball focusing on double movement, scanning, looking over shoulder, angles and distance of support.
* Learning how to play with side on, and back to goal vs facing forward.
* Defending principles: pressure, cover, balance, delay, compactness.
* Attacking principles: penetration, support, width/depth, mobility, improvisation.
* Possession objectives: Building out from the back and through midfield (breaking lines, using half spaces, playing through thirds).
* Attacking themes: Combination play, opposite wingers, creating overloads, playing wide-inside in attacking transitions and scoring.
* Possession with the intention of unbalancing defense, and going forward to goal.
* Wide play with focus on quality of crosses (early service, 2nd six target area, cut backs, high balls, driven ground balls).
* Tech in getting on end of service. Organization and runs into the box to get at the end of crosses (near post, far post runs)
* Speed of transition from defense to attack, and vice versa.
* Reading cues and speed of reaction in transition.
* Team shape, organization and style/pattern of play on a larger field.
* Set pieces in attack and defense (corner kicks, free kicks, restarts).
* Communications between players.
* Identifying and developing team leaders, on & off field.
* Understanding who, when, where and how to press (pressing in groups).
* High press vs low press. Game management.

(Adults model behavior. We are examples of being on-time and prepared – coaches should have field set up when players arrive. Economical training: as much as possible use activities that address all/more components at the same time. No laps, no lines, no lectures).

**ADDITIONAL ASPECTS TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT**

* Post-Training and Post-Game Reflection;
* Continual and informal feedback in training/games.
* Formal feedback meetings and player progress reports;
* Guesting across age or with older, or more advanced teams – training and/or games/events.
* Discussion of pathway, supplemental training, strength & conditioning, college, pro, other level, lifetime sport.
* SMART goal setting.
* College application guidance.