

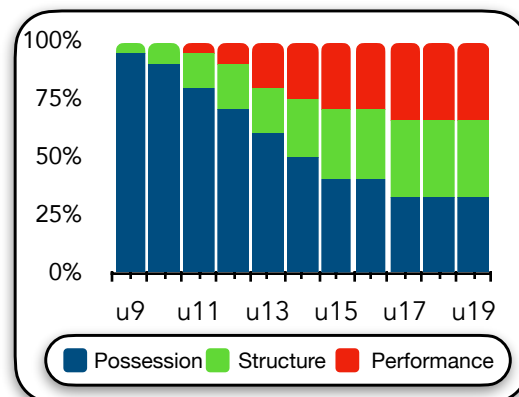


## COMPETITIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN: "FAIL" EARLY

It is always harder to take "success" away, then it is to keep building toward it. It's why we make our focus passing, receiving and technical skills. That is our success - that is where we know players will find success.

The player, age nine, ten or eleven, who "wins" games by outscoring the opponent, by a little or a lot, begins to expect these results. And, if or when it was one or two players who were responsible for "winning" you create two problems:

- (1) *What happens when "other player players" feel overlooked or suddenly incapable of contributing; is interest lost?*
- (2) *What happens when "good players" find a "better team" because their teammates are not improving? Really? Who didn't see that coming?*

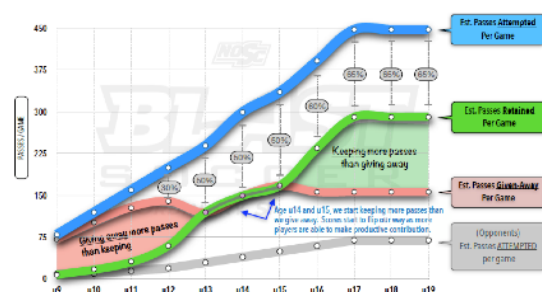


Whenever "winning" is the measure of success at young ages, players lean so heavily on things that work now, they fail to fix things they will need to be successful in the future. The future problems lurking for teams that "win" at 9, 10 and 11 include:

- Fast players today, will be matched by faster players tomorrow.
- Stronger, taller kids today will be matched by other kids growing stronger and taller tomorrow.
- Players who can dribble 30 yards when that was half a field, will fail on larger field.
- Players who never see that ball, see skills decline and interest die.

The game changes, players have to change with it. They need to improve their skills, become smarter, more resourceful and know how to use everyone on the field.

At Blast, our goals are clear. We sacrifice the thought of "winning" from age 9-12 to focus everyone on technical development. At 13, we begin matching our improved technical skills with a sense of accomplishing goals that may "win" a game. At 14, we have a more focused effort for using our skills to achieve results. Throughout this development journey, we are improving - everyone is improving.



One of the bigger challenges can be parents who believe winning is necessary to make a 9, 10 or 11 year old child feel successful. At first, we hear them on the sideline, very vocal shouting "Go! Go! Go!" and to "Shoot!" when the real reward is making pass after pass, connecting teammate to teammate. Passing and possession serves all players, not just a few. Once people see our style connects players and individual receiving builds confidence, everyone understands the long term plan far outweighs any short term desire.

Admittedly, it has been troubling to see leagues like ECNL/GA-DA/NLP, etc... attempt to be a "talent show" missing the chance to develop players. It is why we do it differently here. For us, development is a team event. At Blast, we build for the time when winning matters; here, it is not about simply securing "talent" to "win" games. It is about where continuing to develop players all the way through age 18.