



**Player Development Manual**

# **FTBL Academy's Coaching Philosophy**

## **Vision Statement:**

Develop and encourage innovative and creative soccer players and leaders today that will shape and change the game for tomorrow.

## **Mission Statement:**

To educate, empower, and equip players, parents, and coaches with a genuine love for the beautiful game; and to encourage and inspire youth, of all ages and backgrounds, to develop a passion and absolute love for the beautiful game. By creating environments for the player that will allow them to completely and unconditionally express their passion through pure innovation and creativity. Therefore, allowing each player and team to achieve their personal best; by efficiently and effectively problem solving, no matter the situation.

## **Academy Values:**

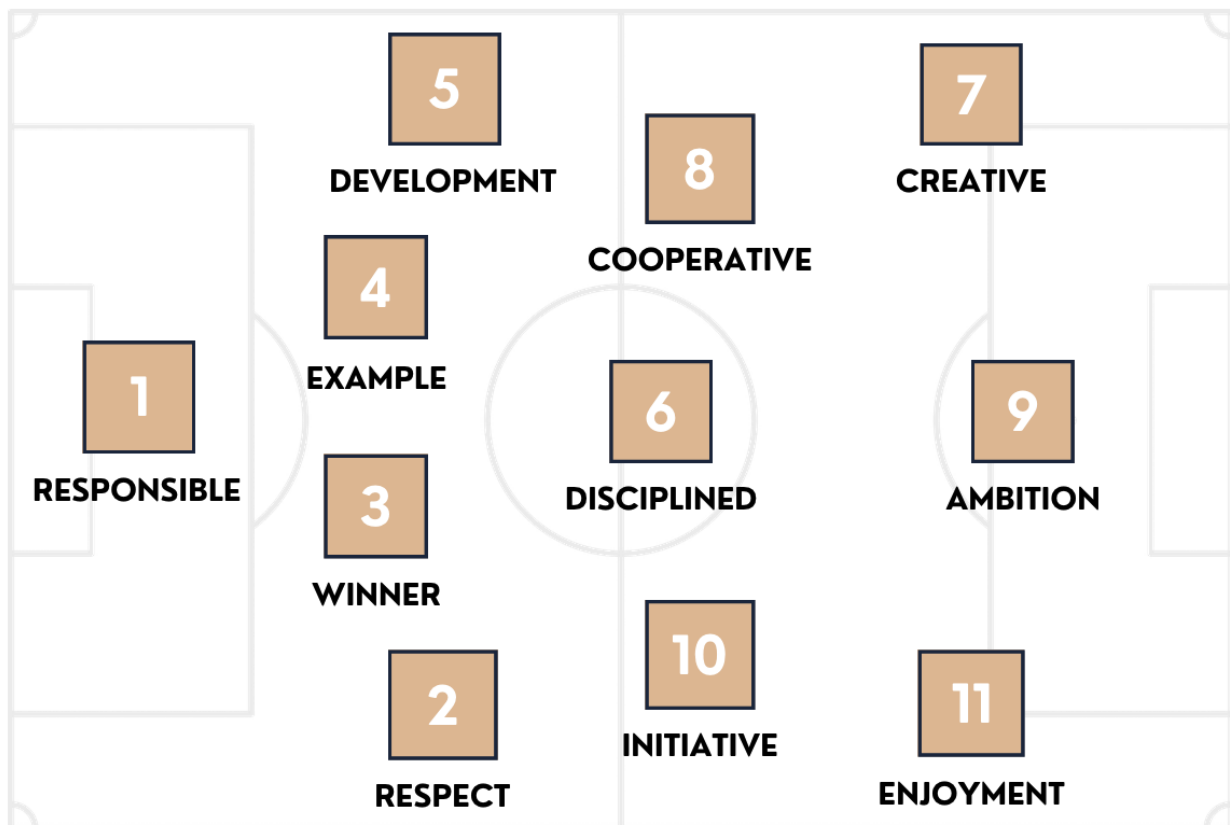
We foster creativity and innovation on the pitch.  
We prioritize player-centric focus in every training session.  
We uphold respect, integrity, and trust in every interaction.  
We drive dedication and passion for the beautiful game.  
We inspire leadership and responsibility in every player.  
We encourage the boundless expression of soccer talent.

## **Footballing Values:**

We play with passion  
We lead with creativity  
We act with integrity  
We inspire through dedication  
We are player-centric  
We adapt with resolve  
We train with purpose  
We embody respect  
We strive for excellence

## A FTBL Athlete...

1. Is **RESPONSIBLE** for their behavior and development.
2. **RESPECTS** themselves, others, and their surroundings.
3. Always seeks to **WIN** and to get the most out of themselves.
4. Is part of the best youth academy and, as such, an **EXAMPLE** to others.
5. Works optimally on their technical, tactical, physical and mental **DEVELOPMENT**.
6. Is **DISCIPLINED**, both on and off the field.
7. Gets **ENJOYMENT** from playing football.
8. Shares a common goal with their teammates and enjoys **WORKING TOGETHER** to achieve this.
9. Has the **AMBITION** to develop themselves optimally.
10. Always takes the **INITIATIVE**.
11. Is **CREATIVE** in their actions and in the choices they make.



# 1



## FTBL QUALITY

Develop players who make a difference on the ball

# 2



## STYLE OF PLAY

Our way of playing football.  
The FTBL Way

# 3



## UNIQUE SKILLS

Developing unique qualities to make a difference on and off the field

## FTBL Academy Pillars of Player Development

Shaping the future of FTBL

The Pillars of Player Development for FTBL Academy provide a comprehensive and strategic approach to player development in soccer. Let's break down each pillar to understand its components and how they contribute to the overall development of the players:

### 1. FTBL Quality:

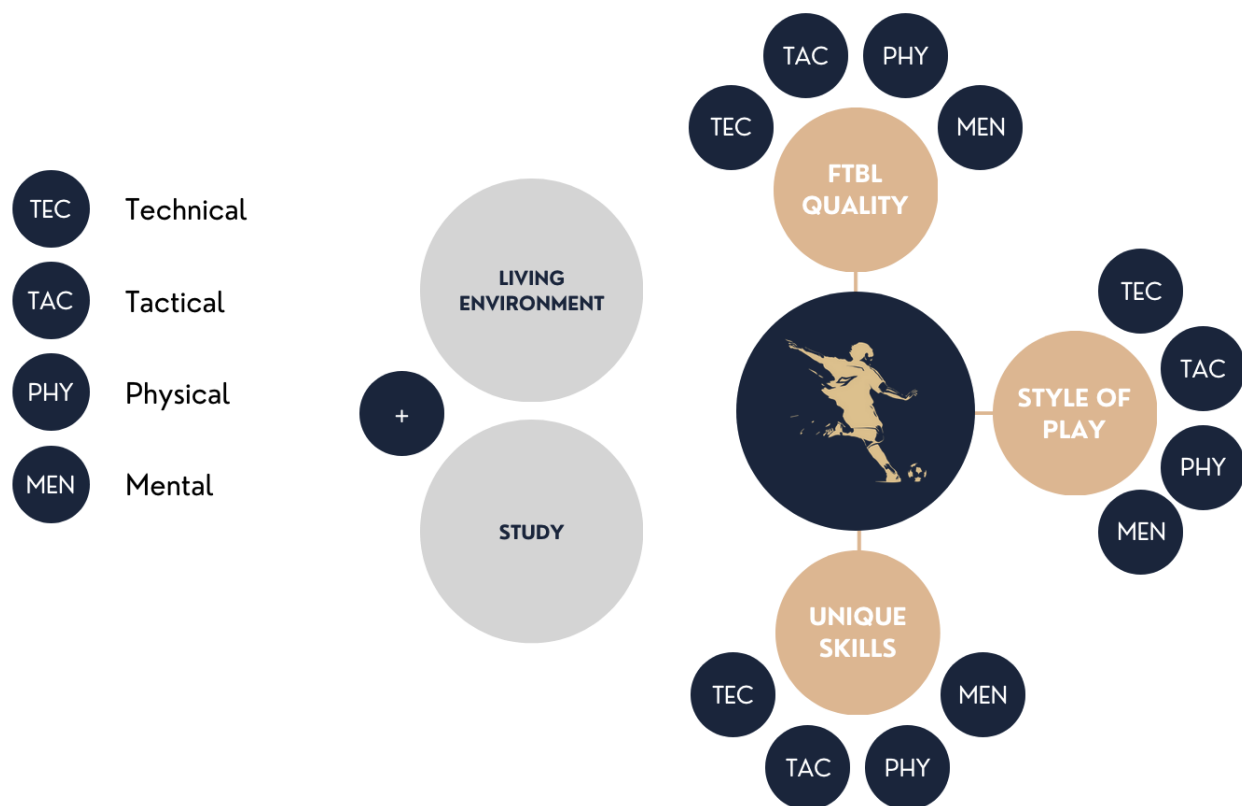
- **Ball Mastery:** This involves training players to have exceptional control over the ball, including dribbling, passing, and receiving skills. Mastery of the ball is fundamental in soccer, as it allows players to be confident and creative on the pitch.
- **1-on-1 Ability:** Developing players' skills in one-on-one situations is crucial. This includes both offensive skills, like taking on defenders, and defensive skills, like tackling and marking. Excelling in these situations can be a game-changer in matches.

### 2. Style of Play (The FTBL Way):

- **Player-Centric Focus:** Tailoring training and development to the individual needs and strengths of each player ensures that each one can reach their potential.
- **Principles of Play:** Understanding the fundamental principles of soccer, such as spacing, movement, and positioning, is essential for players to make intelligent decisions during games.
- **Scenarios & Strategies:** Training players to adapt to different game scenarios and employ effective strategies to overcome challenges.
- **Teamwork & Leadership:** Encouraging collaboration and communication among players to build a cohesive team. Leadership development is also key, as it fosters responsibility and team spirit.
- **Set Pieces:** Specialized training in set pieces like corners, free kicks, and penalties can provide teams with a significant advantage in matches.

### 3. Unique Skills:

- **Technical Mastery:** Enhancing players' technical skills beyond the basics to develop their unique style and capabilities on the field.
- **Tactical Intelligence:** Cultivating an understanding of game tactics, reading the game, and making smart decisions under pressure.
- **Physical Stamina:** Ensuring players are physically fit, agile, and have the endurance to perform at their best throughout the game.
- **Mental Resilience:** Building mental toughness, focus, and the ability to cope with setbacks and pressure, which is as important as physical and technical skills in soccer.



From an academy perspective, this framework emphasizes a holistic approach to player development. It recognizes that becoming a top-tier soccer player involves more than just on-field skills; it's also about mindset, unique attributes, and external factors like environment and education.

## WEEK SCHEDULE (EXAMPLE)

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
TIME	6pm - 7:30pm Division 5 + 6	6pm - 7:30pm Division 4	6pm - 7:30pm Division 5 + 6	6pm - 7:30pm Division 4		
FOCUS	FTBL Quality + Unique Skills	FTBL Quality + Unique Skills	Unique Skills + FTBL Quality + Style of Play	Unique Skills + FTBL Quality + Style of Play	No Training	<b>Matchday</b>
DURATION + TYPE	30 min Technique training	30 min Performance	60 min Technique training	30 min Performance		
	60 min Team Training	60 min Team Training	30 min Team training	60 min Team training		

## FUTURE PLAN

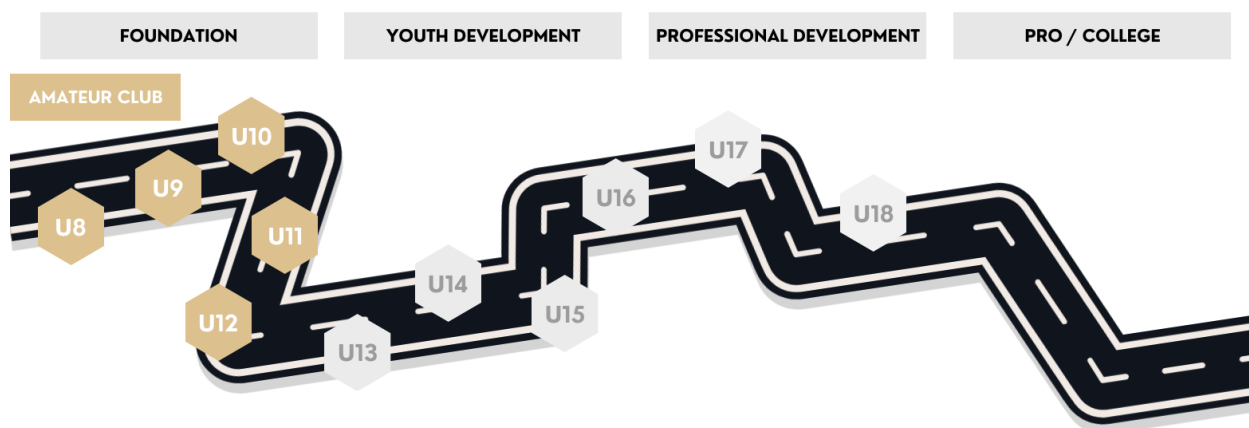
Name:

Date of Birth:

Development Stage:

Team:

Position(s):





E D U C A T E | E M P O W E R | E Q U I P

# FTBL ACADEMY

## INDIVIDUAL PLAYER PLAN



**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MONTH:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Development Stage:**

**Team:**

**Position(s):**

### Golden Movements

Iniesta (inside-inside), Crujff (turn behind standing leg)

### 4 Movements of Coach Rafael

Inside of the foot cut, Outside of the foot cut, Crujff cut, Step-over

### Technical Skill Theme - Passing

- Do you use both legs during training/matches, and is there a big difference between your preferred leg and your other leg...? Assignment ambidexterity...
- Write at least 3 exercises for yourself on how you will work extra on your ambidexterity this coming week.

### Keep-ups

- Within 1 min, keep up as much as possible with right and left
- Keep up with the foot (right), thigh (right), thigh (left), foot (left) and back
- Keep up with a tennis ball... what is your record?

### Training Ambidexterity with the Wall

- Half-volley against the wall & receive from the air before the bounce
- Hit the wall once without a bounce
- Hit the wall twice, receive with left, pass with right and vice versa

### Other Activities

- Organize a street soccer game, Challenge older players, Other sports practiced next to FTBL



E D U C A T E | E M P O W E R | E Q U I P

# FTBL ACADEMY

## PLAYER EVALUATION FORM



**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Development Stage:**

**Team:**

**Position(s):**

Mark rating for each category (1 = needs improvement; 5 = outstanding).

Place an "O" where player would be most successful on offense and an "X" on defense.

### Technical

- \_ Dribbling
- \_ Fakes and Feints
- \_ Change of Direction
- \_ Stop and Starts
- \_ Striking the Ball
- \_ Shielding the ball
- \_ Passing and Receiving
- \_ Long passes
- \_ Crossing
- \_ Tacking and Intercepting
- \_ Throw-ins
- \_ Heading
- \_ Juggling

### Tactical

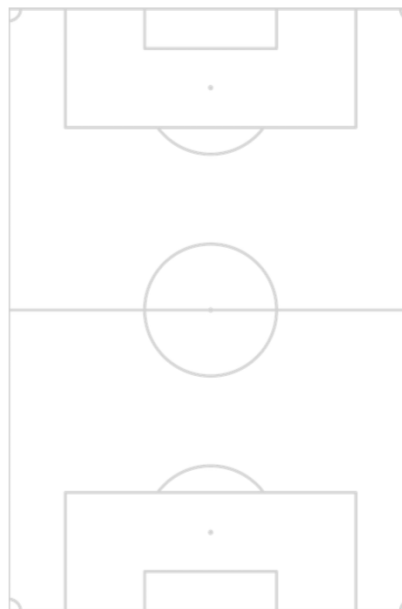
- \_ Support Play
- \_ Off the Ball Movement
- \_ Vision
- \_ Attacking
- \_ Defending
- \_ Speed of Play

### Physical

- \_ Balance
- \_ Agility
- \_ Speed (5, 10, 20 y)
- \_ Power
- \_ Endurance
- \_ Flexibility

### Mental

- \_ Attitude
- \_ Coachability
- \_ Concentration
- \_ Communication
- \_ Sportsmanship
- \_ Leadership



**Coach Comments/Recommendations:**



## Academy Philosophy on Coaching:

FTBL Academy's number one goal is to foster the innate ability for children to do what they are taught and encouraged to do every day; to be creative and innovative both individually and collectively. A detailed **Player Development Pathway** has been developed and will contain three stages; **Fundamentals** (U8 - U12), **Youth Development** (U13 - U15), **Professional Development** (U16 - U18). The stages will focus on attaining specific goals which in turn will ensure the player is properly progressing through the Player Development Pathway. Children will be taught the beautiful game through fun and engaging technical and tactical training sessions that are organized in a manner to ensure success for the individual player and team. The training sessions will focus highly on games and activities that allow the individual player a maximum number of physical touches with the ball. This will encourage the individual to explore creatively and experiment in a manner that is conducive to maximum development potential.

At every stage in the **Player Development Pathway** the *individual* will be the primary focal point with the team as the secondary focal point. Recently, there has been an enormous push of information regarding tactics and system of play in soccer. This barrage has stifled the individual player development and caused a void for learning, growing and creating. FTBL Academy will focus more on the principles of play rather than the tactics and systems of play. This will ensure a more focused approach is taken to individual player development which in turn will ensure individual and team success.

- At the pre-development sequence, ages 4-6, there will be no focus on tactics, team shape, systems of play or positions. We are not trying to create tacticians at this age; we are trying to develop creators and inventors. Therefore, all of the focus will be on the individual which will assist in ensuring maximum development at this stage as this is the beginning of the development sequence.
- The first stage, **Foundation**, in the development sequence, ages 7-9, should be very similar to pre-development but adding some complexity (i.e. incorporating deceptive skills prior to the actual skill; fake strike step-over instead of a step over). This will motivate the player to beat an opponent with skill rather than kick and chase. Some attention will be placed upon the team (no more than 3 players) at U9. The primary focus will be teaching the proper attacking and defending principles of play both individually and as a team. Focusing primarily on penetration, width, support, off ball movement and creativity to include shooting for the attacking principles of play; pressure, cover, proper body positioning (pressing and marking), proper tackling and team shape for the defending principles of play. We will introduce our defending style of play at this stage; Extreme High Pressure! A key phrase or point to instill in your players at this stage is: "ALL PLAYERS ATTACK AND ALL PLAYERS DEFEND!!"
- During the **Foundational** stage in the development sequence, ages 10-12, the player should have obtained a certain level of comfort with a ball no matter the situation they are placed in. To further prepare each of our players for successful competition, we will explore all of the principles of play both individually and as a team. We will focus on how the individual roles fall into the team tactics of the game. During this stage a more

detailed focus will be placed on when and how to penetrate (dribble or pass) with creativity, proper support for the ball (back, right, left and through), 2nd and 3rd man runs with combination play for a mobile attack and spreading a defense from touch line to touch line (width) to open up space in the middle. This will be an introduction to our attacking style of play (combination of possession with a purpose and total football). To ensure we are creating a balanced approach we will continue to focus on defensive team shape and getting number behind the ball (cover and balance), we will begin to explore when to press, delay and deny the ball (pressure and patient defending) and how to stay compact and keep a team from penetrating the middle of the field. We will also continue to explore our tenacious defending style of play; Extreme High Pressure (defend in the opponent's half of the field).

- At the **Youth Development** stage, ages 13-15, we shift our focus to teaching the player how to incorporate their individual creativity, innovation and proper principles of play developed from the earlier stages of development into their tactical decision making. We want this decision making to be effortless and correct most every time (it will not be correct 100 percent of the time, which is an unreal expectation). We will begin to fine tune our defending style of play (Extreme High Pressure) and attacking style of play (a combination of possession with a purpose and total football). In doing this we will begin to develop a speed and rhythm of play that utilizes the individual player's creativity and control in team unison.

The third and final stage in the development sequence in the **Professional Development**, ages 16-18, is to master our style of attacking and defending play. A major component for this stage is to prepare them for the next steps in life and in soccer and to teach them to embrace it and be successful with it.

The collective coaching system of this Academy will be highly encouraged to focus on the aforementioned methods to establish creative and innovative individual technical players and incorporate them into the tactical aspect of the team. Children should be taught all positions on the field, to include goalkeeping, and not just be subjected to play one position. Children should be allowed to experiment and find out what they are good at because if a child chooses to play that position on the field they will give it their best effort. Having a child give 100 percent of their effort 100 percent of the time is one of the greatest compliments any coach can receive because it means you are employing all the correct methods of teaching and the child is enjoying what they are doing.

**As coaches it is our responsibility to teach and instill a passion for the beautiful game.** In order to accomplish this, we need to teach our players to be aware of all the options available to them. This method will produce good decisions, bad decisions and indifferent decisions but by allowing the player to make mistakes and as a coach, supporting/assisting them through this process without negative punishment, will in turn, allow players to develop an ability to quickly identify the right decision in any situation. When the ability to consistently make the correct choice and properly execute becomes automatic and without reminder or contemplation we have truly succeeded and developed exceptional players. This is the true measurement of our success as coaches and is the most gratifying accomplishment that can be attained.

It is important to acknowledge that, throughout each and all of these stages of the player's development, the Academy's values will be implemented and taught by the coaches during training sessions in order to assist in the creation of complete athletes. This may include players taking turns to warm everyone up, discussions around particular values and/or real life scenarios, etc. The philosophy of *winning at all cost* will not be tolerated in this Academy; it is truly about the development of each player both individually and tactically and not about winning as many games and trophies as possible. Winning should never be the focus of anything we do as coaches; rather a by-product of what and how we teach and coach. Teaching players to be self-reliant, humble and exceptional sportsmen will be the greatest asset the child can obtain in life and in soccer. This is done by focusing on the child and not winning. Ultimately the fear of failure will be eliminated and an astonishing level of self-determination and self-esteem will be established that can create elite players and teams for many years to come.

## ***FTBL Academy's Style of Play:***

**Attacking:** During training and matches we will focus on a controlled combination of possession with a purpose and total football. Possession or indirect play is a style of play that focuses on total control of the ball by combining short passes and long passes with calculated probing passes at varied distances. Players will need to focus on providing as much support for the ball as possible and will need to use mobility in order to achieve this. In order to maintain its effectiveness players will need to have outstanding technical ability and be physically fit. The majority of the ball movement will need to be played to feet with penetrating passes finding space between and behind the defense. Total football is team tactical play where all outfield players are interchangeable and the team shape is fluid and ever changing. In total football players are expected to know all the roles on the field and can fill any of them at any time. As the game is played, players will move in and out of positions as their teammates move around the field. This keeps the initial team's system of play intact at all times. All players are expected to attack and defend in total football and a large portion of the success is reliant upon players understanding and applying all the principles of play. Again the players will need to be physically fit to perform at a high standard.

**Defending:** During training and matches we will focus on Extreme High Pressure defending and seeking to play the majority of the game in the opponent's half of the field. The first and perhaps most important part of defending is pressure. It needs to be immediate and controlled and force the attacker to make a decision they were not planning to make. By playing a high line and high pressure we will force the attack to play at a pace they are uncomfortable with and force them to make simple mistakes which will allow our defense to capitalize early and often. High pressure also forces the opponent to pull players back and play at a line uncomfortable for their attack. This assists in mitigating the through or over the top ball because the opponent will be more focused on staying onside which will have an effect on their first step. However, the through ball or over the top ball is the biggest threat and the goalkeeper and full backs need to know and understand this and be expecting it at all times. Therefore, we will require our goalkeepers to be good with their feet and require them to play outside their goal box often. High pressure begins at our attacking line of play; these players will need to keep constant pressure on the opponents back line forcing them to play mistake free. Get everyone behind the ball and win back possession immediately!! As with our attacking style, the players will need to be physically fit in our defending style of play.

# Introduction to FTBL Academy's Coaching Curriculum

## Introduction:

Our vision is to develop and encourage innovative and creative players with genuine leaders today that will shape and change the game for tomorrow. We will use the current strengths of United States Soccer of organization, infrastructure and coaching development. We will achieve this by exemplifying excellence through coaching; and to encourage and inspire youth, of all ages and backgrounds, to develop a passion and absolute love for the beautiful game. By creating environments for the player that will allow them to completely and unconditionally express their passion through pure innovation and creativity. Consequently, allowing each player and team to achieve their personal best; by efficiently and effectively problem solving, no matter the situation.

We will work diligently to ensure that each and every coach implements and combines soccer skill development with the following 3 aspects that summarize our unique curriculum;

- **Sequential Training** (each skill builds upon the next)
- **Compound Training** (multiple skills being accomplished at one time)
- **Specific Training** (everything relates to the sport and has a purpose)

A summary of our encouraging and unique approach for player development and a few of the many benefits are:

- Emphasis on individual player development, particularly during the first two stages – technical over tactical.
- Large focus on small sided games, particularly 1v1 to 4v4, skills and confidence for beating an opponent, confident finishing and fearless defending.
- Players become extremely confident on the ball, develop phenomenal individual technique, defend ferociously and develop impeccable speed of thought.
- Players are exposed to more realistic game-like situations with the street soccer style of training in which the world's greatest team players learned to play.
- Emphasis on great risk taking and the desire to learn from mistakes instead of playing safe and team statistical emphasis.

This curriculum recognizes that there's no possible way for a human to learn all the techniques and tactics of soccer before they complete their youth career at age 18, and that attempting to do so will only result in poorly developed skills and little tactical understanding that can be used at the highest level. Coaches will learn to understand what it takes to build instant perception, self-confidence, technical brilliance and amazing tactical speed. Coaches will learn to appreciate how a team containing multiple players with these abilities will eventually dominate ball possession plus the creation and finishing of goal-scoring opportunities. Coaching technical brilliance and incorporating them into the principles of play will maximize development and will allow players to play in multiple systems.

## **Developing Individual Player and Team:**

As a coach, it is important to be creative. This includes deciding upon a path, planning ahead and sticking to the plan religiously. Creation demands a conscious choice and may only occur when we imagine, predict, plan and act. Great coaches acknowledge that setting goals, developing a vision of the future and following an established curriculum that achieves the ultimate objective is the most effective way to inspire and develop young players. Strategically working and focusing on the future is important in order to invest valuable time and effort into the development of players who are individually gifted and collectively capable of making a positive contribution to any team. We will use the FTBL Academy's "Development Model" of training; (1) technical (2) tactical (3) physical (4) psychological and (5) social, this will change in order of concentration at each stage of training. This will be accomplished in an environment where the pressure to perform is high and the risk/reward is high, the tactical environment is absolutely insane and the pressure to finish under pressure is invigorating and immense. This will ensure we are developing individuals and teams of creativity.

Our aim is to achieve creative unity by developing an extremely talented and thoroughly equipped group of individuals that permit team brilliance with the ability to accomplish things not previously considered possible. For this to be achieved, it is vital that the coach ensure training does not restrict creative opportunities and allows players to conquer progressively complicated challenges in their own unique, improvisational ways. The nature of FTBL Academy's approach generates creative independence and superior levels of confidence, producing an offense that combines technical excellence with extraordinary tactics which can score on any defense rather than relying upon defensive mistakes. In order to obtain this level of play and ability it will require a long-term term vision (all 5 stages of the player's development). It will also require regular losses, mistakes and failures. To this end many academies and coaches have such emphasis on the importance of their team winning that they fail to interpret the amazing opportunities to improve their players by first embracing the individual development success in spite of the result. This open-minded approach develops individual feelings of personal attainment and self-esteem, as well as an appreciation of superior personal potential. In turn, each player is motivated to give maximum effort in the pursuit of soccer excellence.

## **Preserving Creativity and Style:**

The sharp passing game of teams such as Barcelona is widely admired. However, primarily coaching players to only use one and two touches will program and restrict them to get and give the ball very quickly. It is important for us that this 'ball sharing' approach does not come before or at the expense of developing individual character and creativity. At FTBL Academy we develop the player in stages and all stages have a focus on the individual player and creativity, ball skills, deceptive dribbling and shooting. Only when the players have become interdependent will we focus more of our attention on the team game of passing and receiving. This way, we will have more diverse players who have the ability to break down defenses with their great technical ability and many tactical options. To understand the benefits of our approach, look at some of the greatest soccer countries in the world, Brazil, Argentina, Spain, Germany and the Netherlands. These countries have produced some of the greatest players of all time that have helped their countries to great success.

## **Teaching Character and Responsibility:**

In order for people to endure the challenges they face in life, they need character. No matter the age, there is no time like the present to build character. Soccer, with its difficult, enduring challenges, is one of the most complete forms of character building whereby participants are frequently exposed to situations requiring them to overcome the extremes of the environmental, physical, psychological, technical and tactical challenges. The challenge of observing, analyzing and selecting the most appropriate solution whilst being under these pressures, tests the strength of the player's character and spirit. This, along with leadership, teamwork, perseverance and courage makes soccer one of the truest forms of character education. FTBL Academy's approach aims to acquire remarkable character within all players by specifically utilizing all the challenges presented by soccer.

In reality, the coaching component that divides the good from the incredible is the coach's ability to first, maximize the players' self-concept and then their leadership and character qualities. The only way to do this is by constantly extracting maximum effort out of your players. Coaches should use every tool in their tool box to continually challenge players in unique and diverse ways. It is crucial in the development of creativity, skill, tactical speed, fitness, self-belief and mental toughness. The unique focus and intensity you deliver in every practice and game will improve players' self-concept, and in turn develop their leadership capability to its maximum potential.

To create a team full of effective leaders, players must first have great self-concept and be confident in their ability to do the job correctly. In order to develop a high self-concept, players must establish dependence, independence, mutual dependence (with other players), leadership, and mentorship. A true leader will spend years perfecting their craft by making mistakes and persevering.

A player's choice to take responsibility means choosing to achieve, choosing to succeed and choosing to make a positive difference. It is our job to encourage players to accept responsibility in order to become a truly great team player and leader. To reach the highest level of soccer, a child will first have to be selfish and have a major focus on dribbling and finishing at the earlier stages of their development. The development of the truly successful individual is dependent on a foundation of independence. The greatest players are those who can beat players, change a game and don't constantly rely on the support of their teammates. These are players who spend a greater amount of time on the ball, learn the best skills, accept and demand responsibility. Great players take responsibility to be mentors in their own right. They beat players and create space for teammates and help everyone on their team to greater individual and collective levels of success. It is important for us, as the coach, to encourage great individual creative skill and risk taking at the earlier stages in the player's development rather than coaching our players to pass off the ball and responsibility to someone else.

## **Every Player, Every Position with a Long Term Vision:**

Unfortunately, the need to win means that most coaches will keep players as young as six in fixed positions during practice and games. The negative end result: players only see the game from one perspective and learn limited skills, principles of play, fitness and mental demands of that one specific position. It is important that our coaches accommodate and encourage the children's natural love to play, create, experiment and be adventurous in order to grow. Children desire the ball, the last thing they want to do is share it with a teammate. To be able to do all this, it involves great movement and lots of contact with the ball in a creative, free spirited and safe environment. It is important to recognize that young children don't care for or need positional structure in their games. It takes away from the things they see as most enjoyable such as ball contact, movement and playing through exploration. As a result, motivation levels significantly drop.

Coaches at FTBL Academy are required to create training sessions where the emphasis is on doing one's best, individual skill and enjoyment. Each player will play an equal amount of time in both offensive and defensive positions and be encouraged to attempt difficult creative dribbling and ball striking skills in all areas of the fields without receiving negative comments/feedback from the coach or other players.

The nature of teaching is student-centric. Thus, to reach their optimal potential, it is necessary for young individuals to be selfish. At FTBL Academy, we supply our young individuals with a large amount of player-centric knowledge and skill, so that they can become, over the years, the ultimate team of brilliance. While at first, this may result in the team losing the statistical game, more importantly, the individuals who are taking the risks necessary to learn and play a more creative style, are winning in the developmental sense.

Many coaches fail to develop independence in the early stages because of incorrect emphasis on "passing/team", "winning", and "positional play". However, our unique approach to the early stages of development focuses on and encourages individual creative technique and a selfish pursuit of knowledge that eventually promises our players the ability and self-concept to be great team players. Our players are educated not to concentrate or be disheartened by the amount of times they lose the ball and games, as their long-term development will make them the eventual winners. This is achieved by the eventual combination of maturity and external forces (coach and peer pressure), making even the most gifted but selfish players to balance their individual brilliance with a positive team contribution.

Much of the problems in soccer is due to the need of the coach to win games. Unfortunately, because of this attitude, there is no risk of any player developing creativity because to do so increases the risk of losing, which cannot be tolerated by the fearful coach.

### **Training under High Levels of Pressure:**

One reason why some players seem to fall apart when competing at a higher level is because of the increased physical pressure placed on them compared to that of playing at a lower level. As a result, players who are unable to produce deceptive dribbling and hold onto the ball, begin to force passes because they are unable to cope with the tighter and tougher defensive pressure.



In comparison, players who have the ability to; display fakes, dribble deceptively and finish will be able to adjust to the immense pressure and challenges posed by playing at a higher level.

The same applies for players who are trying to cope with the higher levels of psychological challenges. Players with great individual skills and creativeness are much more likely to overcome the mental challenges that the big game situations bring. The ball master is able to conquer his/her fears and utilize his/her extra skill and confidence to manage the psychological challenges. Again, most players tend to force passes before it is appropriate because they have not acquired the mental strength required to hold on to the ball during their early years of development.

It is important to define the coaching philosophy to the player's parents when they first arrive at our Academy. Some people will be unconvinced when explaining that you are going to place a major focus on individual skills and shooting, encouraging the kids to dribble with a high degree of risk and take shots at every opportunity. This will cause some parents and coaches to look at you differently and wonder how you are going to accomplish this and be successful. Remember that some of the greatest players in the world grew up playing street soccer from a very young age; many times 1v1 against a friend or sibling and small sided games of 2v2 and 3v3. We will implement, in every warm-up, this style of play to encourage creativity and maximize touches on the ball. The warm-up will look like this:

- Target areas put in the goal, i.e. shooting at the corners of the goal.
- Goals 20-25 yards apart.
- Playing grid 25x25 yards
- High degree of individual principles of play
- High emphasis on dribbling skills due to small sided teams.
- High emphasis on shooting skills due to the close proximity of goals.
- Crowded practice area with all players playing simultaneously (awareness of space).
- Lots of playing time (maximize possible practice length).

The end goal is to get the individual player to think and plan ahead at speed and to develop an astonishing technical ability in a highly crowded space. Coaches must continually create training sessions that force players to utilize creativity under immense pressure with multiple decision making activities. Over time, the ability to do this will become instinctive and require little to no effort for the players. Therefore, it all becomes a habit rather than consciously taking time to think about it all.

### **1v1 Conditions:**

The 1v1 follows a 'Make it, Take it' or winner stays on style of play. This means that whenever a player scores, that same player retains possession and attacks the opposite goal or stays on the field defending a player coming on. This is intended to create game-like situations to technically and tactically challenge and develop each player's ability to dribble and finish. The following is a proposed sequential list:

- Players must perform a fake before each shot that they take. Failure to do so results in a loss of possession or goal. This encourages players to be creative in order to beat players and score.
- All shots off the floor must be bent, chipped, driven with power with either foot. Failure to strike the ball as specified results in the loss of score or possession. This conditions a full range of shots under pressure.
- Shot must go in the specified areas of the goal, i.e. the corners. Failure to hit the designated spots results in loss of possession or score. This conditions the ability to hit shots where the chance of scoring is the greatest.
- Dribbling player must explode at least 5 yards after performing a skill. This conditions the players to explode away from danger and truly dominate their opponent. Failure to do so results in the goal being disallowed or loss of possession.
- Minimize touches allowed before a shot must be taken after a skill; i.e. the player completes a skill and after that, must shoot on their second touch. Failure to do so results in possession being turned over or disallowed goal. This promotes quick ball striking under pressure before the defender recovers.
- Limit players to using three, two or one specific skill (reduce as players improve). Failure to do so results in loss of possession. This increases the pressure on the player on the offensive.
- The offensive player must explode towards goal as soon as they have shot to maximize the chances of scoring a rebound. If they fail to do this, they either lose possession or the goal is disallowed. This encourages players to always follow-up their shots.
- Every touch must be a fake, skill or shot. This encourages incisive and penetrative play in order to totally deceive the defensive player.

## **2v2 Conditions:**

Our aim with the conditioned 2v2 process is to develop every player's ability to penetrate and score individually, or to use one's teammate to improve the chances and create a scoring opportunity.

The following sequential list of 2 v 2 conditions is designed to gradually increase the level of challenge and accelerate the development of the players involved:

- Fake and move within two touches. This condition dictates that either a fake, shot or pass must be made on or before the second touch in each possession. Failure to do this, results in the loss of possession. This encourages the players to think ahead, develop a viable plan before receiving the ball and play quickly and deceptively in front of goal.
- The shot must be struck on the play away from the skill or first time with power. Any shot counts if struck first-time with power. First time shots can be struck off passes from teammates, after balls deflect off opponents, after balls deflect off other players in practice, or off the goalkeeper, goal posts or cross bar. Failure to strike the ball on the play away from a fake or first time results in loss of possession. This conditions the ability to score first time shots or strike a ball quickly, under pressure.

- Players will be asked to perform one, two or three specific skills in each round. As players improve, increase the difficulty. This ensures all skills that can create a penetrating or goal scoring opportunity are practiced and implemented under pressure. Only the specific skills can be used and must be performed prior to scoring. Failure to perform the skill(s) results in loss of possession.
- The offensive players must both explode immediately after a shot at goal is taken in order to maximize the chances of scoring if there is a rebound. If either player fails to explode immediately, the score will not count or possession will be turned over. The idea is to encourage players to naturally follow up every shot and maximize their chances of a goal from a rebound.
- One touch soccer. The players are allowed one touch before having to perform a skill, pass or shot. Failure to do so results in loss of possession. This is an attempt to produce lightning quick thinking and play from the forwards in order to penetrate effectively.
- Specify a combination play that players must include prior to a goal-scoring attempt. This could include specific types of passing, overlaps and/or fakes. Failure to do so results in a loss of the goal or possession.

### **Goalkeepers:**

We fully appreciate every player at our Academy and this includes our goalkeepers, which is shown in our unique approach to training them. A lot of coaches integrate their goalkeeping training within their team training and frequently deny the goalkeepers of opportunities to be integrated into any developmental activity. As a result, goalkeepers are constantly forced to pay additional money to attend private sessions with specialist keeper coaches. Unfortunately, the goalkeepers therefore switch from a team environment that is specific to developing field players, to an individual environment that doesn't challenge the keeper in the same intense and specific way that working with outfield players in real game situations would.

# FTBL Coaches Development Curriculum

Coach John Wooden has been quoted thousands upon thousands of times but perhaps Coach Wooden's most humble and most influential quote is: *"In the eyes of most observers my title is "Coach" Wooden, but this is not what I would list first on my resume or business card. From my earliest years I have viewed my primary job as one of educating others: I am a teacher."* We must view ourselves in this manner; teacher-coach, we are teaching the beautiful game to the youth of this nation and as a teacher we have a responsibility to ensure we are doing right by our players. Just as teachers demand their students to continue learning outside the walls of school, we demand our players to continue learning outside our training sessions. As a teacher-coach, if we demand our players to continue learning, we must also continue learning to ensure training, teaching and learning does not become stagnant. Thus, FTBL Academy will require each coach to obtain a certain number of *Coaching Education* hours per year, certain Coaching Licenses per stage and a certain number of assessments per year. We will emulate to our players what it means to be proper students of the game.

## ***Fundamentals - Stage 1 and 2 Coaching***

### ***Expectations for a Stage 1 and 2 (Fundamentals) Coach:***

Stage 1 & 2 coaches are coaches that coach the age groups 4-9 years of age.

Stage 1 and 2 coaches will need to demonstrate their understanding of the following aspects of FTBL Academy's coaching philosophy:

- Developing a training plan with the four major components; (1) technical warm-up (2) technical small-sided activity (3) tactical (principles of play) expanded small-sided activity and (4) the final game that incorporates the technical and tactical (principles of play) aspects of the practice.
- Be able to define and implement the three aspects of FTBL Academy's coaching philosophy; (1) sequential (2) compound and (3) specific training; as these are key components to the players' individual development as well as the team's collective development.
- Be able to define and implement FTBL Academy's "Development Model" of training; (1) technical (2) tactical (3) physically and psychological as this will be an expectation for training to assist players and teams to perform at that maximal best.

The technical components that Stage 1 and 2 coaches must be able to properly demonstrate and teach for outfield players are as follows:

- "Skill Model" that the club has adopted (deceptive move, actual skill, and explosive movement).
- Dribbling with all parts of the foot (inside, outside, laces and sole)
- Two deceptive skills: shoulder fake (body feint) and fake strike (fake shot).
- Example skills: step-over turns, Maradona turns, Cryuff turns, inside hook, outside chop, pull back turn, v-cut outside push, single scissors with opposite foot push or same foot drag, Mathews, pull roll behind, foundation, toe touches, triangle, inside and outside roll-ups and over's, base move, Redondo.

- Juggling; foot and thighs to include ways to pick the ball off the ground with feet, i.e. pull roll-up.
- Ball striking with the inside and instep of the foot
- Jockeying and tackling (poke and block tackle) during individual defending

The technical components that the Stage 1 and 2 coaches must be able to properly demonstrate and teach for goalkeepers are as follows:

- Four basic technical ball collection methods; (1) collect the ball off ground (2) basket catch (3) “W” or contour catch (high and to the side) and (4) front smother
- Two basic tactical movements (1) angle arc and (2) ball line
- Two individual dynamic movements (1) drop step and (2) shuffle
- Methods of distribution (1) punting (2) baseball/overhead throw, (3) bowling, and (4) goal kicks

### ***Youth Development - Stage 3 and 4 Coaching***

#### ***Expectations for a Stage 3 and 4 Coach:***

Stage 3 and 4 coaches are coaches that coach the age groups of 10-15 years of age.

Stage 3 and 4 coaches will need to demonstrate their understanding of the following aspects of FTBL Academy’s coaching philosophy:

- Successfully utilize the training plan and progress the training plan and coordinate the four components of the practice plan (technical warm-up, technical small-sided activity, tactical (principles of play) expanded small-sided activity, and the final game).
- Successfully incorporate and establish the three aspects of FTBL Academy’s coaching philosophy (sequential, compound, and specific training)
- Successfully incorporate and establish FTBL Academy’s “Development Model” (technical, tactical, physical, and psychological).

Stage 3 and 4 coaches should be able to clearly demonstrate and teach all technical components for outfield players that the Stage 1 and 2 coaches can with the addition of a few more complex technical and tactical (principles of play) components as follows:

- Third and final deceptive move; hip swivel
- Ball striking with the outside of the foot
- Example skills: double scissors with push or drag, elastico, reverse elastico, cap and half Cruyff Maradona turn, Brazilian toe touches, double pull roll behinds
- Start combining skills to make sequences more complex; i.e. fake strike v-cut outside push with scissors and step-over or shoulder fake scissors and elastico
- Juggling: introduce the head and start teaching tricks (around the world, foot to thigh to shoulder to head to shoulder to thigh to foot, etc.) new pick up skills, i.e. rainbow or rollover pop up

Stage 3 and 4 coaches should be able to clearly demonstrate and teach all technical components for goalkeepers that Stage 1 and 2 coaches can with the addition of a few more complex technical and tactical (principles of play) components as follows:

- Tipping, Punching, and Boxing
- Tactical movements: approach for flank play/corner kicks, breakaway, and 50/50 balls
- Individual dynamic movements: power step (vertical and horizontal)
- Methods of distribution (1) dropkick, (2) sling throw, and (3) back pass

### ***Professional Development - Stage 5 Coaching***

#### ***Expectations for a Stage 5 Coach:***

The Stage 5 coaches are coaches that coach the age groups of 16-18 years of age.

Stage 5 coaches will need to demonstrate their understanding of the following aspects of FTBL Academy's coaching philosophy:

- Successfully determine the areas of need for the team and progress and coordinate a training plan with the four components (technical warm-up, technical small-sided activity, tactical (principles of play) expanded small-sided activity, and the final game).
- Successfully establish and expound the three aspects of ASC Ajax's coaching philosophy (sequential, compound, and specific training)
- Successfully establish and expound the FTBL Academy's "Development Model" (technical, tactical, physical, and psychological).
- Successfully establish the Club's Attacking and Defending Styles of Play

Stage 5 coaches should be able to clearly demonstrate and teach all technical components for outfield players of the previous Stages with the addition of a few more complex technical components and tactical (principles of play) as follows:

- Multiple deceptive skills
- Ball striking with each foot
- Example Skills: double step over, double pull roll behinds, pull inside/pull outside/pull roll behind, Redondo spin, Maradona pull turns, partner pull, roll and pass
- Continue combining skills with more complexity; i.e. hip swivel step over with fake strike v-cut outside push with Maradona pull turn
- Juggling: incorporate head, thigh, chest, and foot and continue to teach tricks (catch on the back of neck) new pick up skills, i.e. slam on the ground or roll up the calf

Stage 5 coaches should be able to clearly demonstrate and teach all technical and tactical (principles of play) components for goalkeepers of the previous Stages with the addition of a few more complex technical and tactical (principles of play) components as follows:

- When to catch and when to tip, punch, or box

## U4 – U6 | Stage 1 - FUNdamentals

### General Characteristics of Stage 1:

- Constantly moving – love to run, jump, roll and climb
- Eye-hand and/or eye-foot coordination is very limited
- Coordination is undeveloped
- Controlling the ball in a small area will be an extremely difficult task
- Understands simplistic and direct rules – run to that orange cone (ensure you point to the orange cone)
- Selfish
- Repetition is key
- Easily motivated
- Reliant on the coach(es)
- Needs a lot of positive encouragement and reinforcement – does not like correction in front of teammates
- Limited attention span – can only comprehend one thing at a time

### Components of the Game for Stage 1:

**Physical:** Introduce the idea of how to exercise. Work on balance, running, starting and stopping, jumping, hopping, rolling, skipping, changing direction, bending, twisting and reaching.

**Technical:** Dribbling (how to stop and start) and shooting (basic technique of striking with the inside of the foot). Experiment with rolling a ball (forwards and backwards) and basic foot skills.

**Tactical:** What the field is, what the boundaries are, which goal to shoot at and playing with the ball wherever it is on the field. Learn what a 1v1 is and who the defender is and who the attacker is.

**Psychological:** Players in this stage are self-centered; it is about me. Children in this stage do not share well together, they will play in a group with their own ball or toys but they do not like sharing it. As coaches we must know this and incorporate this into our training sessions. In soccer you will see players in this stage in a big swarm around the ball; this is because it is the only ball on the field and the child wants it for themselves. This is just fine and the players should be encouraged to get the ball and see what they can do with it, they should be encouraged to be selfish with their ball. The coach must set up numerous activities where the players are together but still involved in individual play.

Children in this stage can only focus on one thing at a time. It will take all of the players attention to perform the exercises they are asked or to control the ball in a soccer activity. In games they will often be faced with multiple players (sometimes their own teammates) trying to win the ball. This will stretch their focus to the max. This is where as coaches and parents we can assist these children by not yelling at them or talking to them as they are playing, let them play and talk to them when they are off the field or at the end of the game. Coaches should instruct the parents to help by just cheering and not giving any direction. Children at this age do not care if

they win or lose, they just want to play. As coaches and parents let's just foster that love and passion, to play, and do not even mention the word win. The coach should also let the parents know that it is normal to play swarm soccer from this stage; this style of play will actually be beneficial in improving their dribbling skills and decision-making ability.

### **Ideal Training Session for Stage 1:**

- No longer than 45 minutes (U4 & U5 would be ideal to have a 30 minute session and a 30 minute game (once per week)
- Every child should have a ball.
- Free play or a warm-up – include body movement introduction with and without a ball (no more than 15 minutes)
- Game-like activities – to include body movement and games; a ball should be involved the entire time (at least 15 minutes)
- Small Sided Game – should be 3v3 – (15 minutes)
- Player-Centered with the coach being a facilitator utilizing the guided discovery as the training method; let the player come up with the answers
- Coach should highly encourage players to be creative and discover how to do the ball skills on their own; coach should demonstrate and let the players play
- Use constant encouragement and praise throughout the training session and continually encourage players to be creative and experiment with their ball

### **Coach's Qualities:**

DO NOT USE THE TERMINOLOGY "DRILLS" AND LINE ORIENTED TRAINING SESSIONS, PERIOD!! The utilization of game activity and the coach as the facilitator will allow the children more time with the ball and experimentation. A sense of humor, calm and friendly demeanor, great organizational skills, patience, ability to properly demonstrate soccer specific skills, enthusiasm and imagination will be great tools for teaching at this stage. Understand that it is okay for children to make mistakes. Ensure all players feel comfortable and safe to explore.

**License Recommendation:** USSF National Youth License or NSCAA Levels 1-3 Coaching Certificates

**The Game:** U4-U6 should be friendly scrimmages where the children are encouraged to showcase their creativity. The game should be 3v3 (field is 20x30 yards) with two goals (approximately 2ft x 3 ft) no goalkeepers (2 – 15 minute halves). There should be no score kept and coaches are allowed to be on the field with the players. There should not be any focus on us vs. them or winning. It is purely about having fun and showcasing what each child has learned.

### **General Information for Coaches to Use in Training Sessions Stage 1:**

Training sessions should be structured so that one third of the focus is on body control (warm-up), one third of the focus is on individual play (game like activity) and one third of the focus is on group play (small sided game). There should be no lines and a great emphasis should be placed on just letting the players experiment with the ball. Players in this stage will



also need to be taught how to control their body before they can control their ball. Having good control on one's body will be essential to how they develop, over time, as players. Controlling the movement of their body will ultimately be the primary goal at this age and ball skills will be second. As odd as this may sound, in order to be good players, the child will need to know what they can and cannot do. This is where, as a coach, you help them find that out with fun games that involve body movement (i.e. hop on one foot with the ball above their head, etc.). These games should be fundamental, basic and FUN. This will start the process of enjoyment for the game as you are their first encounter with the beautiful game.

There should be no mention of positions in this stage, all players are encouraged to steal the ball and not give it away until they score or it goes out of play. Players in this stage will have 50 percent play time and should not play in any tournaments or more than one match per week. They should also only play for 6-8 weeks at a time where they are then given 4-6 weeks off.

## **U7 – U9 | Stage 2 - Development**

### **General Characteristics of Stage 2:**

- Enjoys showing what skills they know
- Developing physical confidence
- Attention span longer but only for a short duration
- Developing friends and playmates and will share some
- Starts to imitate their favorite players
- Still needs encouragement and positive reinforcement
- Starts to comprehend a team and teammates but is still self-centered
- Inclined more toward small group activities and some team play

### **Components of the Game for Stage 2:**

**Physical:** Begin to incorporate agility and eye-foot and eye-hand coordination activities that challenge the mind as well as the physical ability. Introduce leaping, bounding and catching and throwing. Continue to work on balance, running, starting and stopping warm-up activities.

**Technical:** Continue all the items mentioned in Stage 1. Introduce juggling; dribbling with all parts of foot; tackling (poke and block); receiving balls on the ground with the inside, sole and outside of the foot; receiving balls in the air with foot (use juggling for the majority of work with controlling the ball in the air); striking with the inside and instep of the foot; passing with the inside and outside of the foot; shooting and dribbling while changing direction and moving. Introduce the technique for 1v1 defending (jockeying) and attacking (skill for beating an opponent). For goalkeepers (U9): proper footwork and angles, W technique, basket catch, collecting ball off the ground, diving, underarm bowling, side-arm throwing to targets, punting and taking own goal kicks.

**Tactical:** Teach attacking and defending principles of play. Attacking – penetration, width, support (everyone attacks) and creativity; defending – pressure, cover (everybody behind the ball) and patience. Start teaching names of the positions (Forward, Midfielder, Full Back, etc.).

Continue to work on 1v1 and the choice of dribbling or passing. Incorporate games of 2v1, 1v2, 2v2, 2v3, 3v2 up to 5v5. Allow creativity and playing with the ball to create play with a purpose as well as to promote problem solving and decision making.

**Psychological:** Children in this stage still prefer to play as individuals and occasionally with a friend or teammate. The coach must set up activities where play is both individual and together with a teammate but still focuses on the individual development of the player within the team. Learning to share the ball will need to be praised when it happens but should not be demanded from the coach. Encouragement for accomplishing the task of sharing will be the key to this accomplishment and the approval for trying to do so will show the children it is ok. You can let the children know that it is ok to use teammates to assist in solving the problems that the game presents and that they do not need to do it all on their own. Ensure this is implemented slowly and steadily (one teammate at a time). The use of small sided games, which resemble the bigger game, allow for more individual touches on the ball which allows for more creativity and experimentation. At this stage the implementation of a more complex game with obstacles and a target to hit will help the players to learn to effectively solve problems. The aspects of the small sided game are key components to player development for the next years to come.

#### **Ideal Training Session for Stage 2:**

- Should not exceed 60 minutes for U7-U8 and 75 minutes for U9
- Free play or a warm-up with and without a ball (no more than 15 minutes)
- Every player with a ball for the majority of practice
- Introduce activities with teammates
- A mixture of individual and partner activities (20-30 minutes)
- Small-Sided Game of 3v3 to 4v4 no goalkeepers (field is 20-30 to 30x40 yards) with two goals (6ft x 12 ft - 6ft x 18 ft) (approximately 20-25 minutes)
- Expanded Small Sided Game of 5v5 with goalkeepers (field is 50x60 yards) with two goals (6 ft x 12 ft - 6ft x 18 ft) (approximately 20 minutes)
- Player-Centered with the coach being a facilitator utilizing the guided discovery as the training method; let the player come up with the answers. ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS (i.e. When you have a defender coming towards you, what kind of skill move can you do to beat him/her 1v1?)
- Coach should highly encourage players to be creative and discover how and when to pass and dribble on their own; coach should demonstrate technique and skills and let the players play

**Coach's Qualities:** DO NOT USE THE TERMINOLOGY "DRILLS" AND MINIMIZE THE USE OF LINE ORIENTED TRAINING SESSIONS! The utilization of game activities and the coach as the facilitator will allow the children more time with the ball and experimentation. A sense of humor, calm and patient demeanor, great organizational skills, ability to properly facilitate, ability to properly demonstrate soccer specific skills, enthusiasm and imagination will be great tools for teaching this stage.

**License Recommendation:** USSF National E or NSCAA Levels 4-6 and NSCAA Level 1 Goalkeeping License or any equivalent

**The Game:** Matches may be played in an organized manner; should still focus on children and encourage them to showcase their creativity. There should be minimal focus on us vs. them and zero focus on winning; outcomes should not be part of any match or training session. It is still heavily about the children having fun and showcasing what each child has learned. At U9 there should be some focus on passing and teammates but the majority should still be on individual technique and creativity (80 percent individual 20 percent team). For U7 the field should be 30x40 played with 4 field players and no goalkeeper (4v4) with two goals (6ft x 12 ft) (2 – 20 minute halves). For U8 the field should be 40x50 yards played with 4 field players and a goalkeeper (5v5) with two goals (6ft x 18ft) (2 – 20 minute halves) and for U9 the field should be 40x60 played with 5 field players and a goalkeeper (6v6) with goals (6ft x 18ft).

There will be a new phase of the game at the U9 age, offside. Offside's should not be the focus of training at this age but we need to ensure the players are made aware of this rule and understand it. As for tactical implementations, focus more on a team shape and the movement/roles within that shape (do not focus on positioning). Within the team shape emphasize the importance of ensuring the proper spatial awareness and balance on defense and attack. Assist in developing decisions that will connect all the lines of play within the team shape, both on defense and attack (defenders should attack and attackers should defend).

There are many different systems of play to choose from (2-2 and 1-2-1 (U7-U8) and 2-2-1, 1-3--, 3-2, 2-3 and 2-1-2 (U9) to name a few) but instead of focusing on the system of play more focus should be on the style of play. The Academy will focus on a combination of possession and total football for attack and extreme high pressure of defending. Focus the attention more so on principles of play (attacking – penetration, support, mobility, width and creativity and defending – pressure, cover balance, compact and patience); any player with fundamentally sound principles of play will be able to play in any system or style.

### **General Information for Coaches to Use in Training Sessions in Stage 2:**

Making the game fun and instilling a passion for the game is still the number one objective for coaches of this stage. This concentration of fun and love of the game keeps people in the game for a lifetime. There will be a minor change in motor skills in this stage but these skills will still need significant attention. Encourage individual ball control and skill and practice it at every training session.

Incorporate small group play (no more than 3-4 players to 1 ball); this will be essential for maximum touches with the ball while using a teammate. Begin to highly encourage the use of skills with both feet as the players are beginning to understand how to move with the ball. Teaching the use of both feet with skills should be the main goal for coaches committed to player development. Incorporating the use of teammates and showing players that passing is another option to dribbling will be instrumental in future development. Incorporate the option of a pass but do not force or expect the player to pass.

Players at this stage should play every position, to include goalkeeper, as this will be key to determining what they are and are not good at. It also helps us, as coaches, to determine what the developmental needs are of our players. Players that know and experiment with every position on the field have a better understanding of the overall game. Specializing players too

soon may be detrimental to their development and may hinder their growth as a soccer player. The thought process of any coach, no matter what stage they coach, should be to develop soccer players, not positional players.

Coaches can begin to adjust activities to accomplish the desired objectives of the session (make it more complex or simpler). There should not be a lot of lines and standing around nor should there be an excessive amount of instruction, let the children figure the game out for themselves with your facilitation. Players in this stage will have 50 percent play time. U7 teams should not participate in any tournaments, U8 teams can participate in one tournament per season but the focus should be playing every team (festival style) and U9 teams should not attend more than two tournaments per season (Spring and Fall) Teams in this stage should only play for 8-12 weeks at a time where they are then given approximately 4 weeks off.

### **U10-U12 | Stage 3 - Understanding of the Game**

#### **General Characteristics of Stage 3:**

- Ability to understand and handle simple balls in the air
- Puts thoughts in order and conceptualizes actions
- Has a sense of simple understanding to meet simple demands of the game
- Starting to run under control with the ball, change directions and strike the ball while moving
- Optimum time to learn – absolute willingness
- Physical and mental changes to the body - puberty
- Coordination, balance and athleticism has substantially increased
- There is a noticeable difference between female and male athletes
- Strength and power becoming factors in their performance

#### **Components of the Game for Stage 3:**

**Physical:** Fitness should be done with and without the ball. The implementation strength and resistance can be added as part of fitness. More speed and agility over distances can be accomplished from different starting positions. Learning how and when to accelerate and decelerate while making more complex reaction activities. Incorporate a more proper warm-up both dynamic and static as well as a proper cool-down (include static stretching in the cool-down) to assist with injury prevention.

**Technical:** Ability to throw balls in while moving as well as understand how to control balls in the air (thigh, chest, inside of foot, instep and headers). Passing and receiving with both feet from multiple distances and understanding outside of foot and heel flicks. Introduce half volley and volley shooting, chipping to pass and slide tackle. For goalkeeper: introduce punching and boxing, setting the wall, defending corner kicks and free kicks.

**Tactical:** Small group attacking and defending principles of play (attacking – penetration, mobility, width, support and creativity; defending – pressure, cover, balance and patience). Concentrate on the specific roles (first and second attacker and defender) within the principles of play. Explore the understanding of zonal defending and man-to-man defending and when and

how to employ both (reminder that our Academy defending style of play is extremely high pressure). Incorporate more combination play; utilizing wall passes, overlapping and diagonal runs; playing with the ball as a team with a single purpose, to create a goal scoring opportunity (remember the Academy's attacking style of play is a combination of possession and total football). ***Note: it is still important to stress the importance that everyone attacks and everyone defends; numbers forward and everyone behind the ball!*** Start incorporating communication, verbal and visual gestures, to properly communicate what is being seen on the field and how to best respond. Start establishing team and individual goals that should be achieved for each training session and game. For goalkeepers: positional play and understanding where to be with the ball in correlation to the field.

**Psychological:** This player is now in the Golden Age for Learning (10-12) at this stage. The players in this stage will be able to begin conceptualizing and understanding more complex instructions and will create their interpretations with how they play. This should be highly encouraged and allowed as long as it conforms to what is being expected and taught. Individual skill should still be taught and encouraged as the player will start to understand when and how to properly utilize it. Their ability to comprehend enhances their understanding of tactics (principles of play) and what must be accomplished all over the field to succeed. Continue to develop and refine the use of the previous skills and techniques. However, there should be a bigger concentration on utilizing these skills within the team setting and under pressure of time, space and opponents. This will assist the player in developing technical speed of play which will be important as they progress to 11v11. Encourage the player to dribble the space and if space and time allow, taking on the first defender, even though passing has become a bigger part of the overall game at this stage. If this can be consistently accomplished, this will open the field up and set a better picture for the attack. Thus, the majority of the training sessions should be small sided (2v2 to 4v4) and expanded small sided (5v5 to 7v7 with an emphasis on 4v4 for U10 and 6v6 for U11- U12)

This is a vital decision making stage for players in this stage; they will decide what sports they are going to fully commit to playing. In the years leading up to this age they should have been allowed to experiment with all sorts of sports but now a decision will more than likely need made. The coach should understand this and continue to be a positive influence and role model no matter what the child decides and should support and commend the child on that decision.

### **Ideal Training Session for Stage 3:**

- U10-U11 should not exceed 90 minutes and u12 should not exceed 120 minutes
- Warm-up, individual and small group activities and stretching (dynamic and static stretching) use ball with warm up (approximately 20 minutes)
- Incorporate group and team session that include player up to 8; focus should be at 6v6
- Small Sided Games 2v2 to 4v4 with targets, zones and directional play (approximately 30 minutes)
- Expanded Small Sided Games 4v4 to 6v6 with goalkeepers (approximately 30 minutes)
- Cool down to include stretching (approximately 10 minutes)
- Player-Centered with the coach being a facilitator utilizing the guided discovery as the training method; let the player come up with the answers. ASK OPEN ENDED

QUESTIONS (i.e. When you are in a 2v1 and the defender commits to you and the ball, should you pass or dribble?)

**Coach's Qualities:** Should be a great communicator, enthusiastic, has soccer awareness, knowledge of the key factors of basic skill and is able to demonstrate, loves to have fun while teaching, able to deal with children who question/challenge the coach, gives encouragement and preferably energetic.

**License Recommendation:** USSF National D / NSCAA National Diploma or higher or equivalent and Level 2 Goalkeeper License

**Coach/Player Consideration:** At age 12 committed players should consider participating in the state sponsored US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program. Coaches should be aware of this program and should understand the requirements in order to assist the parents.

**The Game:** Matches will be played in an organized manner; a strong focus should still be focused on the children while encouraging them to do their best. At this stage there will be a slight focus to us vs. them and the children will want to start winning. As coaches, we still need to maintain our philosophy on development over winning. At U10 the individual's development will still be more important than the teams but by U12 there will need to be an even focus on team and individual the team and how the individual player fits into that team. For U10 the field should be 40x60 with 5 field players and a goalkeeper (6v6) with two goals (6ft x 18ft) (2 – 25 minute halves). For U11- U12 the field should be 50x70 yards played with 7 field players and a goalkeeper (8v8) with two goals (7ft x 21ft) (2 – 30 minute halves).

### **General Information for Coaches to Use in Training Sessions for Stage 3:**

Players at this age should still be allowed to experiment with multiple positions as this is an integral piece to their future development. They must know the majority of the positions and should be able to play them with a degree of success. Specializing players too soon may be detrimental to their development and may hinder their growth as a soccer player. The only position that should start specialization is the goalkeeper at age 12 but they should still be allowed to play in the field at least half of the time. The thought process of any coach, no matter what stage they coach, should be to develop soccer players, not positional players.

Children in this stage understand team play and now want team success as much as individual success. Now that the child has a good understanding of ball control they should be highly encouraged to combine and try to create their own twist on skills previously taught. With that said, children in this stage may become frustrated if ideas and decisions do not go how they see in their mind. Support and continue to condone thoughtful play. Showing the proper technique of dribbling, ball striking, passing, etc. and allowing the players to "do" will be the best teacher at this stage. Continue the principles of play and illustrate the importance of their specific role within the principles; this will be the key to success at the 11v11 level.

Continue teaching the attacking style of play (combination of possession and total football) and defending style of play (extreme high pressure). On attack, the purpose is to create as many goal scoring opportunities as possible and on defense we want to win the ball back immediately

and play as much of the game as possible in the opponent's half of the field. These principles of attack and defense can be worked with maximum ball touches in small sided activities with greater success; specifically 2v1 to 7v6. While in these smaller sided games innovation and improvisation should be encouraged and rewarded.

When working on principle of defending, players should know what their role on the field is and what they are supposed to do (i.e. when defending we need to put immediate pressure on ball but the player will need to know their role and where they are on the field to attack, delay or deny) with the overall goal of gaining back possession. They also need to understand how to move as a team to minimize the passing lanes and space on defense and maximize the passing lanes and space on attack.

Players in this stage should still experience 50 percent play time. U10 teams can participate in two tournaments per season and U11-U12 teams should not attend more than three tournaments per season, one of which may be a traveling tournament. Teams in this stage should only play for 8-12 weeks at a time where they are then given 2-4 weeks off.

## **U13 – U15 | Stage 4 – Preparation**

### **General Characteristics of Stage 4:**

- 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-conscious about their physical changes

### **Components of the Game for Stage 4:**

**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.

**Technical:** Continue to work on all techniques throughout the season and begin to incorporate chipping to score and bending shots; forward volley and side volley and defensive/attacking heading. For the goalkeeper: backwards diving, saving the breakaway, all forms of distribution, narrowing the angle and improving reaction saves.

**Tactical:** 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 of 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 (wide play, mobility and creativity) and the defense (pressure, cover, balance, compactness, patience and 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 clear and fair along with the expectation 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 individuals and the 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. 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.

#### **Typical Training Session for Stage 4:**

- Approximately two hours no more than 3 times per week
- Warm-up, small group activities, range of motion stretching incorporate a ball -approximately 20 minutes
- Use small sided games activities (4v4 to 8v8)
- Introduce team activities (all 11 players)
- Continue with directional games (4v4 to 6v6) - Play to targets and/or zones - Intersperse functional training -approximately 40 minutes-
- Conclude with expanded small-sided games (7v7 to 9v9) or 11v11 -approximately 45 minutes-
- Finish with cool-down activity, including static stretching -approximately 15 minutes-
- All activities should be challenging, motivating and involve transition

**Coach Qualities:** Should be a great communicator, enthusiastic, charismatic, experienced with coaching, knowledge of the key factors of technical and tactical play, loves to have fun while teaching, articulate, managerial experience and expertise and thoughtful persuader.

**License Recommendation:** USSF National “C” License / NSCAA Advanced National Diploma or higher or equivalent and Level 3 Goalkeeper certificate.

**The Game:** 11v11 (4-4-2; 4-3-3; 4-2-3-1; 4-5-1; 3-5-2, etc.) – With an emphasis on principles of attack and defense and the Academy’s style of play within the system of play. Teams at this stage should be able to adjust and conform to multiple systems of play in order to match up to the opposition (if they have a solid foundation of the principles of play). Players in this stage should also have the technical and tactical ability to know how and when to play man-to-man



zonal defending as well as man mark in a zone defense. The primary focus of matches and training technical application into a tactical setting; know when to dribble and when to pass, understand how to successfully create on set plays, etc. Continuing to be a student of the game and continue to learn and develop the game is still not about winning. There should be a limited number of substitutions to develop team chemistry.

#### **General Information for Coaches to Use in Training Sessions for Stage 4:**

Fitness and nutritional habits should be formed for future success. There should be instructions on what an athlete should and should not eat and drink. At this time in a young athlete's life they will, for the first time, make decisions for themselves. Developing fitness plans for the offseason and in season will be integral for players at the next stage. The utilization of different techniques (overload principle, speed training, resistance training, weight training, etc.) will assist the players to attain the physical attributes that they need for the next level of their career.

Ensure that players in this age are familiar with proper pre-game/pre-training session warm ups and post game/post training session cool downs. This will assist the players with injury prevention and in the event of an injury there will need to be a recovery plan and a plan to supplement the injured players (this is the one main reason for ensuring playing time in multiple positions at the younger ages). Coaches should familiarize themselves with the common injuries in soccer and their recovery times. We do not want to put players back in training before they are cleared or actually ready as this will cause longer term chronic issues.

Continuing the proper techniques of soccer in training should still be a focal point for at least the warm-up section of training. Continuing the excellence of individual technique is not the "end all, be all" in soccer but sound individual technique will assist in achieving tactical superiority. However, this superiority depends on each player's ability to execute the fundamentals of the game. Ensure the players can use the proper skills in the correct situations at game speed; focusing on ensuring they are making the correct decisions the majority of the time, this is how technique in a tactical setting is advanced.

Incorporating 4v4 to 6v6 in training will promote good possession with a purpose that will transform to the bigger game. This will also show the players what tactical decisions need to be made in a smaller, more controllable environment. These small sided games help players read the game as the field and number of players is smaller. Promote the individual techniques in these environments and encourage them to incorporate this into the small sided game. The players are still developing intellectually, even though they are much more apt to understand and comprehend. These small-sided games will assist them with the tactical intellectual growth.

Systems and styles of play are designed to enhance strengths and minimize weaknesses of a team. Teams should be able to employ more than one system or style of play. Players should be able to individually defend or defend as a team (the technique of individually defending should be worked at every stage). Players should understand different roles so that they can interchange as the game progresses. Players should still not be locked into position as this will hinder growth potential and development. Rather work with the players within the principles of play (attacking and defending) and ensure they know how to properly perform in each.

Set plays have now become an important part of the game; one successful set play can change the outcome of a game at a moment's notice. Constant and proper training for set plays should be worked on, at minimum, one training session per week. The most successful way to train set plays is within the flow of practice (i.e. small sided scrimmage, all balls out of play are free kicks from 20-25 yards at different places on the field). Players should understand their roles and should be able to react immediately; players should know what the ideal outcome is and execute to the best of their ability. Teach the players multiple roles so that all set plays are successful the majority of the time, whether defending or attacking.

## **U16 – U18 | Stage 5 - Commitment**

### **General Characteristics of Stage 5:**

- 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-conscious 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 for Stage 5:**

**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 cool-down must include static stretching as well as light movement and proper nutrition and hydration.

**Technical:** Continue to work on all techniques 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 agility aspects involved.

**Tactical:** 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 Academy'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.

**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 the importance of the following:

- Managing emotions
- Dedication
- Commitment
- 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

#### **Typical Training Session for Stage 5:**

- Approximately two hours no more than 3 times per week
- Warm-up, small group activities (incorporate a ball) and dynamic range of motion activities - approximately 20 minutes
- Use small sided game activities (4v4 to 8v8)
- Use team activities (all 11 players)
- Continue with directional games (4v4 to 6v6) - Play to targets and/or zones - Intersperse functional training -approximately 40 minutes
- Conclude with expanded small-sided games (7v7 to 9v9) or 11v11 -approximately 45 minutes-
- Finish with cool-down activity, including static stretching -approximately 15 minutes-
- All activities should be challenging, motivating and involve transition

**Coach Qualities:** Should be a great communicator, enthusiastic, charismatic, experienced with coaching, knowledge of the key factors of technical and tactical play, loves to have fun while teaching, articulate, managerial experience and expertise and thoughtful persuader.

**License Recommendation:** USSF National “C” License / NSCAA Advanced National Diploma or higher or equivalent and Level 3 Goalkeeper certificate.

**The Game:** The game is played at 11v11 from now on; continue to refine the principles of attack and defense and the Academy's style of play within the system of play. Demand players and teams continue to know, understand and perform the Academy's style of play in whichever system of play they are in. Continuing to be a student of the game and continue to learn and develop the game is still not about winning. There should be a limited number of substitutions to develop team chemistry.

#### **General Information for Coaches to Use in Training Sessions for Stage 5:**

Continue to monitor and adjust fitness and nutritional needs to ensure success for future growth. Players should be accustomed to making decisions for themselves, however, they will need to be reminded to make the correct decisions. Continuing offseason and in season fitness plans will benefit the player for future play. Setting fitness goals and tracking them will teach responsibility and accountability as well as a focused work ethic.

Players should know and routinely perform proper pre-game/pre-training session warm ups and post game/post training session cool downs, this is key to minimize injury. Coaches should continue to keep themselves abreast with common soccer injuries as well as concussions.

Continuing the excellence of individual technique will still provide substance and be integral to the future game for the player. However, the player will need to understand how to imprint their technical brilliance within the tactical blueprint of the team. Continue to focus on the proper technique in the correct situations at game speed for the majority of the time. This will be the key for the player to continue playing at higher levels.

Set plays will continue to be a big part of the game. Set plays should be worked on in most every practice. As was mentioned earlier, the most successful way to train set plays is within the flow of practice (i.e. small sided scrimmage, all balls out of play are free kicks from 20-25 yards at different places on the field). Players should understand their roles and should be able to react immediately; players should know what the ideal outcome is and execute to the best of their ability. Teach the players multiple roles so that all set plays are successful the majority of the time, whether defending or attacking.

# TECHNIQUE

## BASIC PRINCIPLES OF TECHNICAL TRAINING

For training techniques, certain basic principles are essential for effectively learning technical elements (appropriate to the age and skills of players).

### ***THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTINUITY***

Given that technique, as a motor skill program, is learned gradually and systematically it is imperative to work continuously throughout its phases according to the player's age.

### ***THE PRINCIPLE OF LEARNING WHOLE-PART-WHOLE***

Refers to the process of adopting technical elements by learning them as a whole (synthetic model) and in parts (analytic model) in the following order: whole — part — whole.

The methodological order for teaching technical elements is as follows:

- Announcing and discussing the importance of the technical element being addressed,
- Explaining the element,
- Demonstrating the element as a whole, and then in parts if necessary,
- Performing the element slowly with proper technique, and then faster,
- Spotting typical errors and proceeding to correct them,
- Performing the technique at an increased pace with semi-active and then active opponent(s),
- Applying the techniques.

### ***THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPLEXITY***

Technical elements should be seen as complex mechanisms, considering that they are closely related to coordination, kinesthetic sensitivity to the ball, precision, space-time alignment (timing) and other motor-functional abilities such as speed, strength and endurance.

During the training process certain didactical principles must be followed:

- From simple towards more complex elements,
- From easier towards harder elements,
- From familiar towards unfamiliar elements.

### ***THE PRINCIPLE OF TRAINING BOTH THE WEAKER AND THE STRONGER FOOT***

In reference to having players develop a larger ability for playing with both feet.

### ***THE PRINCIPLE OF ADEQUACY AND RATIONALITY***

Pertains to giving players an adequate and rational time period to learn a technical element throughout the development process

### ***THE PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUALITY AND SPECIFICITY***

In reference to addressing each player with an individual approach in order to improve their weaknesses in specific technical skills and to address the demands of their position or a specific task.

## **PHASES OF LEARNING TECHNICAL ELEMENTS**

This reflects a long-term path for developing technique and also points to the diversity of approaches (methods) to be used depending on the sensitive phase of biological development.

We distinguish six phases:

1. Developing kinesthetic sense – developing a kinesthetic feel for the ball,
2. Acquisition – the method of initial training where the focus is on developing coordination, precision and the proper biomechanics,
3. Forming a program of proper biomechanical movement, in which the focus is on stabilizing and forming a biomechanical program for a variety of timespace variations (without an opponent),
4. Adjusting to an opponent – a method of functional and situational training focused on applying technique and adjusting to an opponent,
5. Automating – the automatism of functional technique in situational conditions,
6. Creating – applying automated soccer movements and programs in decision-making situations, with the aim of developing the game.

Each of these phases are naturally tied to one another and, depending on the age category, take precedence in implementation. This topic will be discussed later in this book.

# TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

In its fundamental phase technique is divided into two parts: technical movement without the ball and with the ball.

Technical movement without the ball includes the following elements:

- Walking and jogging
- Acceleration and sprinting
- Sprint starts
- Running with changes of direction and speed
- Jumping and leaping
- Falling and landing

Technical movement with the ball includes various technical elements that can be grouped into nine fundamental categories:

1. Striking the ball
  - a. On goal
  - b. Crossing
2. Heading
3. Dribbling, Change of Direction, Shielding
4. Fakes and Feints
5. Passing and Receiving
6. Tackling and Intercepting the Ball
7. Throw-ins
8. Juggling
9. Goalkeeping

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

ID	Category	Subcategory	Technique
1	Striking the Ball	On The Ground	Striking the Ball with the Laces
2	Striking the Ball	On The Ground	Striking the Ball with the Inside of the Foot
3	Striking the Ball	On The Ground	Striking the Ball with the Tip of the Foot (Toe Kick)
4	Striking the Ball	On The Ground	Striking the Ball with the Heel
5	Striking the Ball	On The Ground	Striking the Ball with the Outside of the Foot
6	Striking the Ball	On The Ground	Striking the Ball with the Inside of the Foot (Curve)
7	Striking the Ball	On The Ground	Lob Shot (or Cross)
8	Striking the Ball	On The Ground	Crossing (Curved Ball)
9	Striking the Ball	From The Air	Forward Half-Volley with the Laces
10	Striking the Ball	From The Air	Side Half-Volley with the Inside of the Foot
11	Striking the Ball	From The Air	Forward Bicycle Kick
12	Striking the Ball	From The Air	Forward Volley with the Inside of the Foot
13	Striking the Ball	From The Air	Side Volley with the Laces
14	Striking the Ball	From The Air	Side Bicycle Kick
15	Striking the Ball	From The Air	Bicycle Kick Over the Head
16	Striking the Ball	Off The Bounce	Forward Dropkick (Laces; Inside of the Foot)
17	Striking the Ball	Off The Bounce	Side Dropkick (Laces; Inside of the Foot)
18	Striking the Ball	Off The Bounce	Dropkick with the Outside of the Foot
19	Heading	Off The Ground	Forward Swing
20	Heading	Off The Ground	Side Swing
21	Heading	Off The Ground	Transferring the Ball Backwards



22	Heading	In The Air	Forward Swing (One-Legged Launch, Two-Legged Launch; Straight, Diagonally)
23	Heading	In The Air	Side Swing (One-Legged Launch, Two-Legged Launch; Straight, Diagonally)
24	Heading	In The Air	Striking the Ball Using the Head when Jumping/Falling
25	Heading	In The Air	Transferring the Ball Backwards in the Air
26	Dribbling	-	Dribbling with the Laces
27	Dribbling	-	Dribbling with the Outside of the Foot
28	Dribbling	-	Dribbling with the Inside of the Foot (Zig-Zag)
29	Dribbling	-	Dribbling with the Sole of the Foot Sideways (Rolling)
30	Dribbling	-	Flipper Dribbling
31	Dribbling	-	Dribbling the Ball Forwards or Backwards (with the Sole of the Foot)
32	Dribbling	-	Dribbling with the Inside and then Outside of the Same Foot
33	Dribbling	-	Combined Dribbling
34	Dribbling	-	Dribbling with the Inside and Outside of Both Feet
35	Change of Direction	-	With the Outside of the Foot
36	Change of Direction	-	With the Inside of the Foot
37	Change of Direction	-	Pulling with the Sole of the Foot Behind the Back
38	Change of Direction	-	Pulling with the Inside of the Foot Behind the Back
39	Change of Direction	-	Pulling Back with the Sole of the Foot, then with the Heel
40	Change of Direction	-	With the Sole of the Foot in Front of the Body
41	Change of Direction	-	Step Over the Ball, Turn Backwards with the Other Foot
42	Change of Direction	-	Shielding the Ball
43	Fakes and Feints	-	Feinting with the Outside of the Foot
44	Fakes and Feints	-	Feinting with the Inside of the Foot

45	Fakes and Feints	-	Feint Left - Go Right with the Outside of the Foot
46	Fakes and Feints	-	Dribbling Around an Opponent
47	Fakes and Feints	-	Double Body Feint
48	Fakes and Feints	-	Feint Rolling the Ball
49	Fakes and Feints	-	Feinting with the Sole of the Foot Backwards
50	Fakes and Feints	-	Fake Shot - Inside of the Foot
51	Fakes and Feints	-	Fake Shot - Outside of the Foot
52	Fakes and Feints	-	Flipper Dribbling
53	Fakes and Feints	-	Feinting to One Side and Taking to the Other with the Inside of the Opposite Foot
54	Fakes and Feints	-	Bicycle Feint to the Same Side with the Inside of the Foot
55	Fakes and Feints	-	Bicycle Feint to the Opposite Side with the Outside of the Foot
56	Fakes and Feints	-	Stop-Start Feint
57	Fakes and Feints	-	Step-Over Feint
58	Fakes and Feints	-	Pirouette Feint
59	Fakes and Feints	-	Rolling and Step-Over Feint
60	Fakes and Feints	-	Double Bicycle Feint
61	Fakes and Feints	-	Fake Shot - Pulling with the Sole of the Foot
62	Fakes and Feints	-	Fake Shot - Inside of the Foot Behind the Standing Leg
63	Fakes and Feints	-	Outside-Inside Feint - Snake Feint

64	Fakes and Feints	-	Inside-Outside Feint - Breaking Feint
65	Receiving and Turning	On The Ground	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) with the Inside of the Foot
66	Receiving and Turning	On The Ground	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) with the Sole of the Foot
67	Receiving and Turning	On The Ground	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) with the Outside of the Foot
68	Receiving and Turning	On The Ground	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) with the Laces
69	Receiving and Turning	From The Air	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) from the Air with the Sole of the Foot
70	Receiving and Turning	From The Air	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) from the Air with the Thigh
71	Receiving and Turning	From The Air	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) from the Air with the Inside of the Foot
72	Receiving and Turning	From The Air	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) from the Air with the Chest
73	Receiving and Turning	From The Air	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) from the Air with the Outside of the Foot
74	Receiving and Turning	From The Air	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) from the Air with the Laces
75	Receiving and Turning	From The Air	Receiving the Ball (and Turning) from the Air with the Head
76	Receiving and Turning	Off The Bounce	Receiving the Ball from the Air at the Moment when it Hits the Ground with the Sole of the Foot
77	Receiving and Turning	Off The Bounce	Receiving the Ball from the Air at the Moment when it Hits the Ground with the Inside of the Foot
78	Receiving and Turning	Off The Bounce	Receiving the Ball from the Air at the Moment when it Hits the Ground with the Outside of the Foot
79	Passing the Ball	-	Passing with the Inside of the Foot
80	Passing the Ball	-	Passing with the Outside of the Foot
81	Long Passes	-	Long Passes in the Air - Parabolic
82	Long Passes	-	Long Passes (Sliced Kick) on the Ground
83	Long Passes	-	Long Passes (Sliced Kick) in the Air - Long Balls
84	Tackling	-	Basic Take-Away
85	Tackling	-	Knocking the Ball Away on the Ground in Front of an Opponent

86	Tackling	-	Taking the Ball Away on the Ground by Intercepting a Pass in Front of an Opponent
87	Tackling	-	Taking the Ball Away by Pushing an Opponent off the Ball (Shoulder-to-Shoulder)
88	Tackling	-	Knocking the Ball Away with the Foot in Front of an Opponent after the Ball Bounces
89	Tackling	-	Taking the Ball Away from an Opponent by Intercepting a Pass after the Ball Bounces
90	Tackling	-	Knocking Away a Coming Parabolic Ball with the Foot in Front of an Opponent
91	Tackling	-	Knocking Away a Coming Parabolic Ball with the Head in Front of an Opponent
92	Tackling	-	Knocking Away a Coming Parabolic Ball with the Head Behind an Opponent
93	Tackling	-	Slide Tackling Sideways (Closer Foot to Opponent)
94	Tackling	-	Front Slide Tackle
95	Tackling	-	Slide Tackling Sideways (Farther Foot from Opponent)
96	Tackling	-	Slide Tackling from Behind (Closer or Further Foot from Opponent)
97	Tackling	-	Taking Away a Coming Parabolic Ball by Intercepting a Pass in Front of an Opponent
98	Throw-Ins	-	Throw-Ins by Hand while in Place (Diagonal and Parallel Positioning)
99	Throw-Ins	-	Throw-Ins by Hand when Running (Diagonal and Parallel Positioning)
100	Juggling	-	Juggling with the Laces
101	Juggling	-	Juggling with the Thighs
102	Juggling	-	Juggling with the Outside of the Foot
103	Juggling	-	Juggling with the Inside of the Foot
104	Juggling	-	Juggling with the Head

**When referring to technique with the ball, we divide it into:**

1. **Elementary technique:** focused on establishing a sense for basic biomechanic movements,
2. **Dynamic technique:** applying elementary technique in dynamic situations,
3. **Functional technique (individual tactics):** applying elementary techniques in decision-making situations that also incorporate individual tactics.

	ELEMENTARY TECHNIQUE	DYNAMIC TECHNIQUE	FUNCTIONAL TECHNIQUE
AIM	Forming basic biomechanical movements	Applying elementary technique in dynamic situations	Applying elementary technique in the function of decision-making
CONDITIONS	In static and dynamic conditions	Dynamic conditions	In dynamic, situational conditions
PRESSURE	Without pressure	Time-space	Time-space, psychological
TRAINING METHOD	Analytical methods in isolated conditions	Synthetic method in isolated conditions	Synthetic method in eased and situational conditions

As we can see from the table, technical development has its own methodological and logical sequence. The first phase, containing large amounts of controlled repetition, establishes an important sense for the fundamental movements and biomechanics of performing elementary technical elements. In the second phase, it is necessary to apply the elementary technique in dynamic situations. The segment of developing precision in dynamic situations and progressing to the obstacles of spatial pressure, especially when receiving and passing, is the most important task during this stage of development. Forming these kinds of subconscious programs (engrams) is necessary in order to progress into the functional technique phase. A very effective method, which provides the necessary environment for controlled repetition of dynamic technique, is the circular training method.

# TACTICS

Tactics in soccer represent the formation and development of specific skills and understanding of typical structural situations that are presented in a game. Having tactical knowledge means knowing what decision to make with or without the ball depending on space-time circumstances, current ball movement, the position of teammates and opponents and also being able to find the appropriate solution, in a situation, that coordinates with concepts of the game in all of its stages and the coach's desired plan. A successful tactical performance requires players to have skills such as tactical thinking, the correct assessment of situations, and finally, the ability to find the best solution for any given situation in any part of the field.

## BASIC PRINCIPLES OF TACTICAL TRAINING

Similar to technical training, tactical training is also divided into certain basic principles.

### ***THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTINUITY***

Tactical preparation begins from the first day a player trains at a soccer club, though always according to the specific demands that are reasonable for each age group. For beginners, tactical learning is dominated by free play where a child's creativity, improvisation and imagination can grow and be shown. Following the free game, players are gradually introduced to the focused game (with specific demands) and finally they learn to accept responsibility in a competitive game. Coaching in younger age groups is dominated by individual tactics accompanied by small group action, with team tactics introduced later with older age groups.

### ***THE PRINCIPLE OF ADEQUACY AND RATIONALITY***

Tactical means, or resources, must be useful and applicable in a soccer game as well as during the development of tactical knowledge.

### ***THE PRINCIPLE OF SPECIALIZATION***

In reference to player specialization, which should not be implemented too early, it is advisable that young players play multiple positions within a team in order to develop a more universal set of skills and experiences. In soccer, it is desirable that players are exposed to a variety of situations at an early age rather than limited to one position. This helps them attain all of the skills necessary to be successful in soccer games, and thus even youth goalkeepers mostly train as if they are outfield players. Coaches should respect this principle despite the fact that players at this stage will already show signs of quality and preference of a certain position that makes them feel most comfortable and likely where they experience the most success. It is important that a child experiences more than one position at an early age in games and within training, as well as every possible technical and tactical element.

### ***THE PRINCIPLE OF ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY***

When educating and training young players they should be encouraged to be creative, and this can be done by acknowledging when they make good decisions in a game, or when they make a mistake but with the right intention, and by using methods of praise and rewards. It is crucial to make the distinction between a technical error (poor execution of the right decision in the game) and a tactical error (choosing a poor solution based on a situation) and also realize that

these two errors are corrected differently. When a tactical error occurs, something can be learned from it immediately by pointing out a better solution in the following play. Technical errors are much more difficult to correct and should be forgotten during the game but noted as a subject to be covered during training in the coming period, and the player should nonetheless be complimented for making the right decision even if it was executed improperly.

## **METHODS FOR TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL TRAINING**

**IDEOMOTOR** – a player's ability to envision TE-TA exercises or concepts upon request, after which the coach asks questions and encourages them to give meaningful responses. This process is often supported by the use of video or a coaching board; the latter should certainly be used at all levels of competition, conditions and age. Coaching boards have been in use for a long time to prepare for matches before kickoff and at half time. Today, at the highest level, they are also often used during substitutions to prepare players who are entering the game from the bench by repeating tasks or giving them further instructions on potential tactical solutions.

**ANALYTICAL** – Learning tactical elements first in parts and then, after mastering them separately, as a whole.

**SYNTHETIC** – Learning, grasping and mastering tactical elements as a whole.

**SITUATIONAL** – Training in conditions similar to a game or in the game itself.

This kind of program for training and learning tactical elements is executed through a general methodological procedure:

- A. Explaining the point of an exercise
- B. Demonstrating the exercise
- C. Executing the exercise in slow motion
- D. Raising the intensity with changes in rhythm
- E. Executing the exercise with a semi-active opponent
- F. Executing the exercise with an active opponent
- G. Applying tactical discipline in a game.

In a tactical sense, several concepts are present simultaneously, including: *f*

- The **FOUR MOMENTS** in a soccer game and their **PHASES**
- The training **CONDITIONS** for each of those four moments by age group
- Team **FORMATIONS** and **STYLE** of play
- Main **PRINCIPLES** of the game
- Specific **DEMANDS** within those principles

## MAIN MOMENTS OF THE GAME

Soccer is a mixture of continuous action and disruption where, unlike in some other sports, the game is dominated by continuous activity and exchanges of the ball upon which each team's tasks in the game also change. This makes the game much more dependent on individual decisions of each player on the field, rather than on predefined set plays by the coach, as often seen in other sports.

The game of soccer can be observed through four basic moments in which actions occur:

1. **ATTACK**– this is the time when the team has possession of the ball
2. **Transition to defense (losing possession)** – a very short period in the game (5–10 seconds) after the team loses possession of the ball and tries to prevent the other team from transitioning into a quick counter-attack and scoring a goal
3. **DEFENSE**– this is the time when the opponent has possession of the ball
4. **Transition to offense (gaining possession)** – a very short period (5–10 seconds) after any one of the players on the team regains possession. Listed above are the four basic moments; there are, however, offensive and defensive set plays which will not be covered in detail in this book.
5. **Offensive set plays**
6. **Defensive set plays.**

## PHASES OF PLAY

All of the four main moments in the game can be assigned to a certain area of the field or a team's line of offense/defense, depending on where action is taking place. These moments can also be divided into phases:

1. **ATTACK**
  - a. **Build-up** – this phase of the game usually evolves in a team's own third of the field, where the goalkeeper and back line (plus players possibly checking to the ball from another line) are focused on moving the ball to the middle third of the field or behind their opponent's first defensive line (their offensive players/forward line).
  - b. **Possession in the middle third** – this phase of the game usually evolves in the middle third of the field where the middle line (plus players possibly checking to the ball from another line) with support from the back line play the most important role in moving the ball behind the opponent's middle line towards the final third of the field.
  - c. **Creating chances and finishing** – this phase of the game usually evolves in the final third, or the opponent's defensive third of the field, where the forward line (and possible players offering support from another line) plays the most important role in penetrating through the opponent's back line in order to score a goal.



2. **TRANSITION TO DEFENSE** (transitioning from offense to defense when the ball is lost).

3. **DEFENSE**

- a. High pressure – this phase of the game usually evolves in the opponent's third, where the forward line, with support from the middle line, plays the most important role in disrupting the opponent's attempt at building-up and moving the ball to the middle third of the field past our first line of defense.
- b. Zonal pressing – this phase of the game usually evolves in the middle third of the field, where the midfield line, with support from the back line, plays the most important role in disrupting the opponent's attempt at keeping possession of the ball and penetrating past our midfield.
- c. Zonal defending – this phase of the game usually evolves in the opponent's final third, or our own third, where the back line (and possible players offering support from another line) plays the most important role in disrupting the opponent's attempt at creating and capitalizing goal-scoring opportunities by penetrating through our defensive line.

4. **TRANSITION TO OFFENSE**

(transitioning from defense to offense after winning the ball).

5. **OFFENSIVE AND**

6. **DEFENSIVE SET PLAYS**

- kickoff
- goal kick
- corner kick
- free kick
- penalty kick
- throw-in

# TRAINING CONDITIONS

In the long process of planning and programming development training in soccer it is very important to know that adopting and learning TE-TA elements can be done in:

1. **Static,**
2. **Dynamic,**
3. **Functional,**
4. **Specific, and**
5. **Situational training conditions.**

Although the execution of more or less every element is a complex task and a lot of the above mentioned conditions overlap, some fundamental characteristics differ. Also, each of these training conditions plays a major role in the final product and performance of a certain element at the highest level of the game. It is recognizable that the first two levels only cover technique, the third (functional) connects individual techniques and tactics, and the last two (specific and situational training conditions) include small group and team tactics. The progression of these five training conditions should be seen in almost every training session, if not every single one.

## **1. *STATIC TRAINING***

Static training is predominantly present when working with younger age groups during the early phases of development when players are learning, grasping and adopting TE-TA elements. At this stage, ensuring that players understand and master the proper biomechanics of sports movements is the priority in everyday training sessions. Great attention should be paid to correcting important details within each step of biomechanical movement, which a player is executing through conscious control, and then ensuring a high number of proper and controlled repetitions. Furthermore, static training conditions provide a calm, easy environment that allows players to make proper biomechanical movements a habit, and in turn this forms a stable foundation to build upon in the future. This development phase should not necessarily be associated with making movements functional, because that requires an adequate sense of space and time, which is not yet a priority. Nonetheless, the ability to apply every element that is learned in training functionally should be emphasized whenever possible to remind players why mastering those skills is crucial to their development. However, keep in mind that functional application is not yet the priority, but rather creating a foundation of proper biomechanical movement.

## **2. *DYNAMIC TRAINING***

Dynamic training/exercising is the next phase in the process of adopting TE-TA elements or knowledge. The goal of this phase is the application of previously adopted TE-TA elements in isolated but dynamic conditions that reflect the dynamic form of this element in a game (considering that the biomechanical movements are mastered to the level of subconscious execution necessary for an adequate performance). Establishing a foundation of proper dynamic form is the main objective of this phase, with an emphasis on accuracy (passing, shooting, etc...). Furthermore, it is still important to pay special attention to the details of proper biomechanics and correct any mistakes that may occur.

Each technical element should be practiced in as many dynamic variations as possible in order to gradually develop a sense for spatio-temporal patterns, and thereby develop a higher quality of individual knowledge and a sharper foundation for each element. Functional use is still not a priority, but repeatedly exceptional execution under dynamic conditions is an essential prerequisite for situational and tactical problem solving in functional conditions.

### **3. FUNCTIONAL TRAINING**

After forming a dynamic foundation, the next phase covers applying that knowledge of TE-TA elements in the function of solving certain technical, but mostly individual tactical, situations. Although the priority in this phase is functional movement, just as in the last two phases, a high number of properly executed repetitions are necessary to ensure performance quality and adaptation to conditions of pressure, reduced space and time, and even psychological factors.

Focusing on the details of sports movement, biomechanics lose their priority (assuming that the basic foundation was formed); however, attention should now be turned to adjusting to situations of space-time diversity within a single TE-TA task, while continuing to execute already adopted biomechanical movements. Utilizing proper biomechanical movement and technique, while simultaneously adjusting to various demands, is crucial for improving functionality and performance within any TE-TA task. Functional training mainly stems from the principles of the game, but can also be a supplement to any situational exercise. Assuming that a quality dynamic foundation has been formed, the largest portion of time should be spent on dynamic and functional training during this period of youth player development, because it provides a greater ability for functional control of any given element and therefore, a higher level of TE-TA knowledge and faster decision-making.

### **4. SPECIFIC TRAINING**

Specific training generally refers to practicing specific scenarios of the game. Some aspects are individual; however, components are mostly related to group tactics (for example, decision-making with respect to group play).

Perceiving the phases of the game through such a prism gives us the ability to generalize individual and group play into specific situations characterized by certain principles, but not tied to specific formations or player positions. This means that we have the opportunity to teach players how to cooperate in group play regardless of a specific position, but also with respect to general positions on the field and the formation within which the team operates. This is extremely important in the age groups before players are specialized to a specific position so that they all learn the basic TE-TA skills needed in situations that are seen in the game.

One example of this kind of training is resolving a 4v2 situation while trying to keep possession of the ball. This numerical relationship can happen almost anywhere on the field and may include any given player regardless of their position. Such training is the foundation of group play in a game, with respect to the principles of proper positioning in a particular space (during a 4v2 possession game the general shape is a triangle or

rhombus relationship with width and depth) and is usually carried out as a small-sided game with simplified demands.

## **5. SITUATIONAL TRAINING**

In the progression of long-term training development, the last phase is training through situational exercises. The goal of this phase is to apply a player's already formed and functional TE-TA knowledge into tactical situations that directly correlate to specific events that can occur during a game. In addition to individual tactical-situational tasks, the goal is also to practice complex tactical situations in this period, assuming that a foundation of dynamic and functional knowledge of particular elements has been formed. The situational phase primarily deals with the decision-making process in specific game-like situations.

Situational coaching derives from practicing the situations that occur in a game, and it also includes the basic and specific-situational TE-TA principles, which will be covered more in detail later in the book. It is important to note that every situational method is also specific; however, not every specific method is situational. The two concepts complement one another exceptionally well during this progressive training process.

An example of an exercise/game that can be situational and also specific is a 4V4 (+3 neutrals) possession game that anchors players to certain positions. If the players are placed in their usual position on the field and are paired with the teammates with whom they usually cooperate during games, then this game becomes situational. However, if the coach's aim is not based on players' positions but rather to achieve universal and specific goals (such as firm and accurate passing and receiving and proper distribution of players on the field) then the same exercise/game is used in the specific sense (meaning the players are not necessarily in the positions that they play in games).