



COACHING RESOURCE MANUAL

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COACHING CONSIDERATIONS

PLANNING AND TRAINING

PRINCIPLES OF COACHING:

- ✓ **BE PREPARED: WRITE A SESSION PLAN;** make sure the session is fun and flows
- ✓ **BE PRODUCTIVE:** Be firm, consistent and fair to all players
- ✓ **BE PROGRESSIVE:** Work from individual to small group to team
- ✓ **BE POSITIVE:** Always smile, give high fives and act in a positive way at all times
- ✓ **BE PATIENT:** Remember it takes a long time to perfect a technique or skill and assume nothing
- ✓ **BE PROACTIVE:** Get to know your players, parent, trainers and those associated with the club. Attend coaching worktops, clinic and get your players and parents involved too!

TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS:

- ✓ **CHALLENGE THEM:** Don't make practice too simple, static or predictable; they will not be challenged.
- ✓ **CURRICULUM GUIDES:** Don't make practice too hard or above their capacity to learn; they will be frustrated (so will you) and lose interest. Follow guides and teach age appropriate.
- ✓ **OBSERVE:** then coach. Let them figure out the problems. Guide them, but allow them to make decisions
- ✓ **FREEDOM AND CREATIVITY:** Allow them to play without fear, without constant stoppage, and with positive feedback.
- ✓ **DYNAMIC:** Training must be DYNAMIC; no line, laps or static work. NEVER associate fitness with punishment.
- ✓ **LEARNING STYLES:** Players learn by doing. Show them, demonstrate and they will try to replicate. Through doing, they will learn and understand.

RUNNING A GAME

- ✓ **WARM UP:** Arrange for players to arrive a set time before kickoff for a warm up.
- ✓ **PRE GAME:** Spend a small amount of time giving clear instructions before they warm up. Remind the players what has been worked on during the week's practices.
- ✓ **COACHING THE GAME:** observe.....let the players get into the game. Ask yourself if they are performing what has been practiced. At young ages, there will be obvious skill and physical differences. When there is a clear mismatch, consider moving that player to another position especially if their confidence becomes affected. Be positive with everything you say. Tell them what they do right, and tell them how to do things right. DO NOT tell them what they do wrong without telling them how to do things right.
- ✓ **DO NOT MICRO MANAGE:** Constantly telling them what to do will frustrate them and you end up making decisions for them. They will only develop if they problem solve....not you!
- ✓ **SUBSTITUTES:** Have a policy and rotate you players regularly. When a player leaves the game; talk to them, tell them what they did well and offer advice on what they can do better.

- ✓ **HALF TIME SPEECH:** Give them time to get a drink and settle down. Give them clear instruction. Tell them what they did well, and how you would like to see them improve and how to improve it. The last thing they should hear is motivational, encouraging comments.....NOT “do this or else”
- ✓ **PLAYERS ON THE BENCH:** Keep these players active. Stand with them, talk to them about the game. Ask them questions about the game. Watching the game is a useful learning tool.
- ✓ **AFTER THE GAME:** Take the opportunity, at the end of the game, to talk to the team about their strengths, weaknesses and the game in general. Send them home knowing what they did well and with a smile.

GAME DAY CONSIDERATIONS

There may be times where your team may be winning or losing by a considerable number of goals. Here are a few ways to make the games even:

- ✓ **INCREASE NUMBERS:** It is ok, if you have to add an additional player on to the field to play 3v4 or 4v4 to ensure games stay close

SOCCER TECHNIQUES

COACHING POINTS

DRIBBLING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ Lean forward and over the ball
- ✓ Knees bent, on the balls of feet
- ✓ Relax body
- ✓ Balance is a must
- ✓ Keep ball close
- ✓ Use inside, outside, instep (laces) and bottom (sole) of both feet
- ✓ Be creative, use imagination - develop your own style
- ✓ Use body feints
- ✓ Change speed and direction
- ✓ Look up as much as possible
- ✓ Use body to shield/protect ball
- ✓ Don't be afraid to fail. Take risks in offensive third of the field.

PASSING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ Eyes on the ball at the moment of contact
- ✓ Non-kicking foot alongside of the ball; don't reach for ball
- ✓ Ankle locked on kicking foot
- ✓ Follow through toward target
- ✓ Inside-of-the-foot pass, toe pulled up at a 90-degree angle
- ✓ Inside to keep the ball low, strike the ball at the midline of the ball or above
- ✓ Outside-of-the-foot pass, toe pointed down, strike across the ball toward the target
- ✓ Instep drive: For long passes in the air make sure that the player is making contact with the ball below the midline. When trying to drive the ball with less air under it, the player should not follow through up into the air with the kicking foot. Stop the kicking foot at the point of contact
- ✓ Practice passing with both feet at all times
- ✓ Emphasize the importance of pace and accuracy

RECEIVING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ Go to the ball to be in a position to control early
- ✓ Position the body directly in line with the flight of the ball and determine the surface to be used for controlling the ball
- ✓ At the moment of contact with the ball, the part of the body contacted is relaxed and gives slightly to kill the momentum of the ball (magic hop)
- ✓ Keep the ball close (don't stop the ball completely) and guide it in the desired direction. The first touch must be constructive to prepare for next move (first-time pass, shot, dribble, etc.). Using the various foot surfaces (inside/outside/sole) to redirect ball as it strikes foot; ground simultaneously (wedge control). A bad first touch will result in losing possession
- ✓ Before the ball arrives, the player should know the position of opponents and teammates. Be thinking ahead - if you receive a ball and do not know what you are going to do next, it will be too late

FINISHING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ Accuracy is the key - finishing is merely passing the ball into the goal past the goalkeeper

- ✓ Power is determined by the speed of the foot at the point of contact and the technique used
- ✓ Body alignment - whenever possible, head and kicking knee over the ball and hips and shoulders square to target
- ✓ Firm ankle, toe down
- ✓ Non-kicking foot placed comfortably beside the ball, with the toe pointing to the target
- ✓ Eyes kept on the ball at the moment of contact - on approach to goal take a quick look up and pick out target, then focus on ball. Many young players try to look at the target while making contact with the ball
- ✓ Keep head still throughout the follow through
- ✓ Follow through - ankle remains firm, toe down and follow through to the target
- ✓ Do not try to over-hit the ball (many kids swing so hard at the ball that they usually swing around the ball and mishit it badly)

HEADING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ Eyes open
- ✓ Chin in, mouth closed, keep neck firm
- ✓ Attack the ball - don't let the ball hit you
- ✓ Contact the ball just above the eyebrows or forehead
- ✓ Arms help to propel the head forward as well as aid in balance
- ✓ Use legs and back for power (arch and uncoil)
- ✓ Foot action - rocking motion, back foot to front foot
- ✓ Timing of the jump is very important - make contact with ball at the highest possible point

TRAINING YOUR AGE GROUP

CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING PRIORITIES

The following pages represent Shenandoah Valley United's recommendations on best practices in soccer according to the player's chronological age, from Under-6 through Under-18. It is just as important, however, to consider the players' "soccer age" (i.e., his or her level of soccer competence), when determining themes to address in practice and matches. Remember that these recommendations are based on the assumption that the players have the ball skill necessary to move onto the next level of challenges. It is the responsibility of the coaches to continually evaluate and assess the needs of their players so that they can play soccer at the appropriate level. Parents and coaches alike should also take care to give their players a variety of playing experiences so that they are able to find some games where they are more challenged and some games where it is a little bit easier. In this case, it is the responsibility of the adults to evaluate this on a team and individual basis.

ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY AND BALL SKILLS BEFORE TACTICS

The youth coach has an important role in encouraging the development of these fundamental tools. One of the goals of this coaching guide is to introduce parents/youth coaches to an approach to coaching youth players that 1) embraces the lessons that are found in the game itself, and 2) is player-centered rather than coach-centered. What does this mean? Consider the following comments by Hans Bongers on the growth of soccer around the world in the last 30 years, and how adults/coaches have approached player development:

"Organized soccer "boomed" in the seventies. Not only did the number of people around the world who play in leagues drastically increase, also the age at which the youngest kids could start to play official games went down to 5 years and even younger. Parallel to this, many well organized coaching clinics and soccer schools, based on different educational theories were created, all hoping that a new Pele or (Johan) Cruyff would emerge from them and the brilliant collective play of the Brazilian team in the sixties and the Dutch ("total soccer") team of the early seventies could be reproduced. In the last decade many soccer associations from different countries have asked themselves how (even if!) soccer can be taught. (Hans Bongers: Somagic Street Soccer/ www.streetssoccer.hypermart.net)"

By default, the well-intentioned and seemingly reasonable approach of many youth coaches is to look to adult soccer as their guide to teaching the game. What most youth coaches find helpful in the adult game is the organization and positional responsibilities (tactics) that the adult players exhibit so well. They are concepts that adults can understand well and so, as coaches, many tend to bring an organizational or tactical approach to coaching youth. Coaches often focus on keeping the players under control and teaching what appears to be the basics of the game: organization, positions, tactics, how to prepare to win games. We choose order over apparent chaos. It is tempting to strive to have the youth games look like adult games, with kids holding their own in set positions, organized and disciplined. The magic of the Dutch players of the early seventies, or Brazil's great players of the sixties, however, was not created from an organized practice routine. It began when they were children, in pickup games where the player and the game were the dominant factors. There were neither adults nor a set schedule of mandatory practices and games. That said, we live in a different world today. Adult supervision is often necessary to ensure proper safety. The presence of adults, however, does not have to inhibit the opportunity for children to be creative and experimental in their approach to learning soccer.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE AGES

U6: KINDERGARTEN

Five- and six-year olds are too young to be involved in any structured, organized soccer program. At most, they should be involved in fun activities that encourage the children to explore their physical abilities, while also including a ball with which to play. Make sure these are activity based games that emphasize exploration and experimentation with the rolling, spinning, and bouncing qualities of the ball. The soccer ball should be considered a toy. There should be no activities where players wait in lines to perform a pre-determined movement or required action.

Five- and six- year olds, although still young, are beginning to gain more control over their bodies. At the same time, it is still new to them and they will require a lot of time and energy figuring out what their bodies can do, and how to use this developing coordination. Children at this age also love to use their imagination when they play. Keep this in mind when designing games. They ball goes out of bounds, the game is restarted with a kick-in or dribble-in. No throw-ins. Enjoy playing on their terms, and as a by-product of their play, they will gain some limited comfort with the ball. Although they love to play, their ability to stay focused on any one thing is very limited. Keep your activities short and simple. Finally, even as they are steadily developing physical and mental abilities, they are still very young. Always treat children with care, patience and give plenty of encouragement. It can be helpful to include parents in the practice/play time so they can take ideas home with them to their backyards or parks. If children must be involved in these organized practice times, they should be having so much fun that when they go home; the soccer ball becomes one of their favorite toys.

UNDER 6 AGE CHARACTERISTICS:

- ✓ During this phase the difference between boys and girls is minimal.
- ✓ Very little comprehension of time, space, relations and boundaries.
- ✓ Naturally swarm around the ball like a beehive.
- ✓ Concentration should be on developing a comfortable level with the feet and body.
- ✓ They respond to imaginative games with underlying soccer specific themes.
- ✓ They will be self centered.
- ✓ Expect that attention spans will be very short.
- ✓ They constantly need positive affirmation.

COACHING CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS AGE GROUP:

- ✓ Patience, good humor, and a willing to see the world through a child's eyes. Also, the ability to speak their language and accept that the children's play will not always look like soccer.

UNDER 6 TRAINING PRIORITIES:

- ✓ Be comfortable with the ball and body.
- ✓ Promote and emphasize the skill of dribbling.
- ✓ Discourage "big kick" and "just kick it" mentality.
- ✓ Teach fundamental movements with the ball.
- ✓ Teach shape not positions. Play 3v3 or 4v4 and teach triangles and diamonds.

CONSIDER THIS: At these young ages, the primary goal is to make the player's experience with soccer so enjoyable that when he or she has a choice of activities, he or she choose to play soccer on his or her own.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE AGES

U8: 1st GRADE AND 2nd GRADE

These children are still young. By the end of this phase, (around eight- years-old) children are beginning to be able to apply past experience to the present situation. For example, at a simple level, they can remember what they were shown or what they tried with the ball from last practice. At the same time, this ability is not present on a consistent basis. They are still not able to imagine consequences (i.e., if you do this, what will happen?). Let them learn through experience.

Do not attempt to replicate organizational schemes that you have seen older teams doing. Seven and eight year olds are not capable of playing anything that resembles organized soccer. For example, team concepts such as combination play or positions should not be introduced at this age. Do use older players as mentors and role models. Often the younger players will learn simply by watching how the older players move or by what they can do with the ball.

UNDER 8 AGE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Attention is limited to one task at most. Be careful not to over load with information.
- ✓ Their incentive for playing soccer is not to become a great player. Rather, it is to have fun.
- ✓ They are inclined towards small group activities, but their team identity is developing. They will play with others.
- ✓ Dribbling and shooting become more exciting than passing or other technical skills.
- ✓ They are willing to accept challenges.
- ✓ Concept to time and space start to form.
- ✓ Great need for positive reinforcement. They have a fragile self concept and image.

COACHING CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS AGE GROUP

- ✓ The coach must clearly understand the capabilities and limitations of this age and appreciate the power of learning by watching. He or she must have the ability to demonstrate or to use older players to demonstrate.

UNDER 8 TRAINING PRIORITIES

- ✓ Being comfortable with the ball – dribbling.
- ✓ Teach games that emphasize awareness (head up), turning away from pressure (shielding and turning) and changing speed and direction.
- ✓ Passing in 2's while moving (never static or in lines).
- ✓ Receiving and 1st touch. Not trapping – the ball keeps moving on the 1st touch.
- ✓ Shooting with laces – off dribble.
- ✓ Continue 3v3 and 4v4; but introduce game rules – kick off boundaries, etc.
- ✓ 1v1 games; defending and beating an opponent.

CONSIDER THIS: How can the coach help all his or her players to develop to their potential? First, help your weaker players to develop their confidence with the ball. At the same time, continue to challenge your stronger players to expand their creativity and confidence. Confidence is the key. The more time they spend during practice and games with the ball at their feet, the more comfortable they will become, the more confident they will become, the more they will look to get involved, and the more fun they will have with soccer.

Remember that the level of skill and competence that a 9-year-old exhibits is no indication of the skill and competence that he or she will exhibit at 16 or 18 years of age. You cannot predict which 9-year-old will develop into a real player. Therefore, work to encourage all your players to be competent and comfortable with the ball. This will give all your players the same opportunity to reach their potential.

Work during practice to move all your players forward at their own pace. Do not be concerned with match results. Be concerned that all your players want the ball at their feet and they want to score. If you can accomplish this, you have successfully allowed your group to grow as soccer players. Unlike practice, you cannot add more balls/goals during games to give kids more chances with the ball. But you can emphasize certain themes for the players to focus on, such as getting involved, attacking the goal, taking chances, and then spend the length of the game reinforcing these points. This approach will give your players the green light to experiment and be creative - qualities that, unfortunately at the younger ages, are often discouraged on game day, in the name of being safe and winning.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE AGES

U10: 3rd GRADE AND 4th GRADE

Soccer for this age is a fun activity for the kids that encourages a lot of games to goals and encourages experimentation with the ball. The ratio of balls to players should be small enough that all your players are involved all the time. The focus is on developing a relationship with the ball in a joyful environment. There should be no standings and no awards.

At this age, there are some children that are becoming more physically mature. Among your group, there are now some bigger and faster players whose eye-hand and eye-foot coordination is a little ahead of the majority of your players. Some of your players may also demonstrate a greater capacity to stay focused for longer periods of time. At the same time, they are still people of action rather than thought. Explanations must still be brief, concise and purposeful. What seemed to make sense to them last practice may have to be almost relearned at the next practice. Care should be taken with players, regardless of athletic ability, to address ball skill, especially in tight spaces.

The faster, stronger players should not be encouraged to use their athleticism to solve all their problems. Building comfort with the ball at ages nine and ten will provide them with a variety of crucial tools they will need as they get older, and the level of ball skill and athleticism rises. Begin to introduce the players to the idea of thinking about their decisions and movement as being related to themselves and one or at most two of their teammates and one or two of their opponents.

UNDER 10 AGE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Enter “golden age of learning” they want to learn skills, refine them and be challenged.
- ✓ Boys and girls start to develop differently. Athletic players will dominate during this age.
- ✓ The players ability to concentrate increases
- ✓ Keeping the score in competition helps maintain this focus but the coach must put a proper perspective on winning and losing.
- ✓ Team concept emerges; they enjoy wearing a uniform, wearing the same items or having the same ball
- ✓ Some become more serious about playing and competing.
- ✓ Fine motor skills become more refined.

COACHING CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS AGE GROUPS

- ✓ Energetic. Plays while facilitating practice. Stimulates ideas.

UNDER 10 TRAINING PRIORITIES

- ✓ Dribbling; running with the ball
- ✓ Passing; technique at speed using a variety of surfaces (laces, inside, outside) crossing a ball. Introduce lofting a ball, driving a ball.
- ✓ Receiving; ground and air balls
- ✓ Shooting; from different angles, turning and shooting, breakaway, finishing from a pass.
- ✓ Heading; introduce partner activities
- ✓ Tackling; poke and block tackles. As well, tackling from various angles.
- ✓ Defending; role of 1st and 2nd defender; introducing pressure from various angles, marking and goal side play.

CONSIDER THIS: Do You Notice an Uneven Skill Level within Your Team?

Often times on younger teams (8-10 years) you will notice a small number of relatively competent players per team who always seem to be around the ball. They have some quality(s), speed, strength, tenaciousness, and ball skill that separate them from their teammates. The rest of the kids are more like on-field spectators, never actively seeking to participate. If the ball does land at their feet, they look to get it as far away from themselves as possible, as quickly as possible. A consistent problem for the youth coach and players is that the ability level on a team is very uneven. This is a normal situation for younger teams across the country, especially, but not limited to the recreation level. There are several reasons for this imbalance: 1) Children start playing at different ages. There could be first-timers playing alongside kids who have been playing for several seasons. 2) Children in this age bracket develop at different rates, both physically and emotionally. 3) For many kids who lack the basic soccer tools, a full-out match can be intimidating. To address this challenge, try playing games with 3 balls going at one time. Another option is to be creative when choosing your groups for 'mini-games,' putting the more confident players together playing against each other and the more developing players playing in a different area. Occasionally using these methods will allow for all of the players to be challenged at a level that is appropriate to their own developmental level.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE AGES

U12: 5th GRADE AND 6th GRADE

The U-12 age group seems to be the moment in youth soccer that causes the most discussion concerning player development. Are these players young adults or are they still children? As soccer players, they are still young. Although there are some areas of the game where the players are beginning to make progress, this is an age where ball skill and soccer instincts must be encouraged above the results.

Physically, eleven and twelve year olds' bodies are beginning to change. Often, this results in awkward growth spurts. Rapid bone growth often results in painful joint conditions such as Osgood-Schlotters syndrome in the knees. Players that, in the past, showed precise control over their bodies and the ball will sometimes now temporarily lose this coordination. As their bodies grow, especially the 11-year-olds, they will also need more rest. The coach may also find the 11-year-old to be somewhat contrary and oppositional. Typically by 12 years old, children are regaining some of the coordination and compliance that was temporary lost at 11. Generally at this age, there is more enthusiasm and ability to focus their energy toward both individual and team challenges. Coaches can use this enthusiasm and focus to their advantage by giving the players specific problems to solve within the games they play.

UNDER 12 AGE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Enjoy competition. Development at different rates due to puberty.
- ✓ Psychological development occurs.
- ✓ Systematic approach to game; they problem solve and attempt creativity in trial and error situations
- ✓ Flexibility; understand warm up and cool down.
- ✓ Popularity has a direct correlation to self esteem
- ✓ They have a sense of morality and values. They may challenge a referees or coach's decision.
- ✓ Parental influences can rear its head over the child and coach.

COACHING CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS AGE GROUP

- ✓ Sensitive teacher, enthusiastic, posses' soccer awareness, ability to demonstrate or utilize someone whom can paint a good picture (older player, assistant coach). Posses' knowledge of the key factors of basic skills. Give encouragement. Have an appreciation for the relationship or connection between individual skill and small group insight, and the player's eventual success at the older ages and the larger game model of 11v11.

UNDER 12 TRAINING PRIORITIES

- ✓ Dribbling; encourage risk taking and creativity. Mastering 1v1 attacking.
- ✓ Passing; 1 and 2 touch, looking for depth.
- ✓ Keeping possession and support play. Introduce combination; wall pass, overlap, takeover.
- ✓ Finishing from flank play.
- ✓ Heading; introduce defensive and attacking headers.
- ✓ Adding pressure to increase speed at which they perform. Adding time restriction, space restriction and opponent pressure.
- ✓ Attacking; awareness of where to take risks (middle/attacking third).
- ✓ Defending; pressure, cover in small groups and introducing balance.

- ✓ Continue to teach technical/fundamental skills but in small groups environments 2v1, 3v2, 3v1, 4v2, 4v3, 4v4.

CONSIDER THIS: *“If your team is winning most or all of its games at this age, you as a coach are probably doing something wrong.” – Gerry McKeown, Technical Director of Player Development Academy (PDA) New Jersey*

Care must be taken at the younger levels to select players based on their soccer abilities and not on their ability to achieve an immediate result. At the U-12 level, it is easy to win games by just using physically big players who have matured earlier than their peers. As a result, the smaller, skillful players are at times not chosen, as they are not able to “win” the game. Special care and attention must be given to these “smaller” players.

At the same time, special care must also be given to the physically more mature players in developing their technical skill, and their ability to maneuver with the ball in tight spaces. As coaches, we always need to keep an idea on the long-term development of all the players.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE AGES

U14: 7th GRADE AND 8th GRADE

At this point, there is a clear difference between the emotional and physical maturity of a 13-year-old and an 18-year-old. While there is not a big difference between the way a 13-year-old or an 18-year-old processes information (thinking and problem solving), keep in mind that the 13-year old is just beginning to think at this level. In contrast, an 18-year old will have more experience and confidence in his or her ability to think and problem solve in this manner.

13-year-old children are now less certain about themselves, less communicative, and somewhat more vulnerable. They are now more focused on their friends and begin to view themselves as being somewhat separate from their parents. They are also stronger physically and are more aware of what their bodies can do (speed, strength, appearance).

The 14-year-old is typically becoming more outgoing and confident and loves competition. He or she is also increasingly more able to plan, think ahead, and to imagine options. Coaches can have more discussion about the “what if...”

UNDER 14 AGE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Differences in mental and physical development has an impact on performance
- ✓ Sense of belonging and achievement are primary. “ I play centre midfield”, “we won the league”.
- ✓ They are self critical and critical of others.
- ✓ Becomes a time of independence.

COACHING CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS AGE GROUP

- ✓ The U14 coach should have a firm grasp of both the youth game and the junior game. They should have an appreciation form creativity and independent thinking. At the same time, they should be able to communicate group and team themes to the players in a clear and simple manner.

U14 TRAINING PRIORTIES

The speed of the game quickens and physical mismatches often occur between players and teams.

- ✓ Dribbling; technical speed of 1v1, add feints/turns, all under pressure
- ✓ Passing; focus on range of passing; long, short, as well as types of passing; driven, chipped, crossed
- ✓ Receiving; focus on quality of 1st touch; form air and ground. Shielding from opponent as receiving.
- ✓ Shooting; from angles, cut backs, breakaways, from crosses and volleys
- ✓ Heading; offensive (down, glancing, power) and defensive (away, redirect) and passing headers.
- ✓ Tactical; continue 1v1 and small group tactics.
- ✓ Group and team tactics; teach defensive shape of midfield, forward and defensive unit. When to step, drop, delay. Pressure, cover, recover, balance and compactness in all units.
- ✓ Teach possession in attack, creating opportunities’ through different ways.

CONSIDER THIS: Matches are important as a means to player development (enjoyment, ball skill, insight, and fitness), not as the aim. In this respect, the usefulness of the game can occur in many different forms, from the 4 v 4 to the full-sided match model. Even at the senior level, the game still offers opportunities for growth, however the weight of balance between factors such as enjoyment, ball skill, insight, fitness and results shift more toward the latter.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE AGES

U18: HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS

By high school, players should be comfortable dealing with the ball in a variety of situations. With this in mind, the coach should look to address several issues that address how basic tactical issues can influence the game:

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

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

UNDER 18 AGE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Differences in mental and physical development has an impact on performance
- ✓ Sense of belonging and achievement are primary. "I play center midfield", "we won the league".
- ✓ They are self critical and critical of others.
- ✓ Becomes a time of independence.

COACHING CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS AGE GROUP

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

UNDER 18 TRAINING PRIORITIES

- ✓ Mastery of technique and skills in pressured environments
- ✓ Continued technical mastery; dribbling, passing, receiving, shooting, heading and tackling.
- ✓ Continued development of player responsibilities in attack and defense and within units.
- ✓ The need to increase decision making of players under pressure and at speed.
- ✓ Teach linkage between lines; defense and midfield, midfield and forward connections. Both in attacking play (speed of play, combination and support play, indirect and direct styles of play) and defensive play (high and low pressure, channeling play, pressing).