



ELIZABETH FORWARD SOCCER ASSOCIATION

IN-HOUSE COACHES' MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Forward Soccer Association (EFSA) is a volunteer non-profit organization that is dedicated to enriching the lives of youth through the sport of soccer. Our mission is to:

- Provide a learning environment for all players to gain awareness and confidence in the sport of soccer.
- Promote an atmosphere of sportsmanship for all players.
- Promote the concept of teamwork for all players.
- Promote athleticism and physical fitness to our youth.
- Increase awareness of the sport of soccer among the youth and adults of the community.
- Increase the level of play among the Elizabeth-Forward youth to create opportunities for players to advance as far as they desire.

EFSA understands that the best way to achieve these goals is to commit to supporting our volunteer coaches. It is essential that we provide our coaches with the resources and training necessary to effectively teach the skills and tactics that will improve the development of our players. In addition to continuing to support the formal licensing and education of our volunteer coaches, EFSA will continue to provide age appropriate practice plans throughout our in-house program in accordance with both US Soccer and US Youth Soccer guidelines and recommendations.

This In-House Coaches' Manual has been developed to help all of our coaches, new or experienced, feel comfortable with their role...use it as a resource throughout the season. It is our hope that by focusing our resources on training and retaining enthusiastic volunteers, both our players and coaches will benefit and have a more enjoyable and more educational experience in youth soccer. We are excited that you have chosen to join us!

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CHARACTERISTICS
AND ORGANIZATION BY
AGE GROUP

CHARACTERISTICS OF PLAYERS BY AGE GROUP

Players are, of course, individuals. They develop and mature at their own pace. However, generally, players by age share certain characteristics. While I coach should always be aware of the player that outpaces the norm, planning for training should consider the general characteristics found by age group.

CHARACTERISTICS OF U - 6 PLAYERS

- Short attention span.
- Can attend to only one problem at a time.
- May understand simple rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated.
- May or may not understand or remember: what lines mean on the field; what team they are on; what goal they are going for. We need to be patient and laugh with them as they get 'lost' on the field.
- Easily bruised psychologically. Shout praise often. Give "hints", don't criticize.
- Need generous praise and to play without pressure. No extrinsic rewards (trophies, medals, etc.) should be given for winning.
- Prefer "parallel play" (Will play on a team, but will not really engage with their teammates. Thus, a 3 against 3 game is, in reality, a 1 against 5 game because they all want the ball at the same time.
- Very individually oriented (me, mine, my).
- Constantly in motion, but, with no sense of pace. They will chase something until they drop. They are easily fatigued but recover rapidly.
- Development for boys and girls are quite similar.
- Physical coordination limited. Eye - hand and eye - foot coordination is not developed. Need to explore qualities of a rolling ball.
- Love to run, jump, roll, hop, etc...
- Prefer large, soft balls.
- Catching or throwing skills not developed.
- Can balance on their "good" foot.

How does the youth coach adapt?

- Make sure every player has their ball
- Develop ball mastery by letting players develop motor skills with the ball
- Worry more about how the players are learning and less about how the team plays together
- Keep them busy at practice!
- Games work better than drills!
- Take advantage of their selfish nature to turn them into dribblers!

CHARACTERISTICS OF U - 8 PLAYERS

- Attention span is a bit longer than U-6 players but still not at a "competitive" stage
- Inclined towards small group activities.
- Always in motion: scratching; blinking; jerking; rocking....
- Easily bruised psychologically. They will remember negative comments for a long time. Shout praise. Give "hints".
- They want everybody to like them.
- Developing physical confidence. (Most are able to ride a two-wheeler.)
- Starting to imitate older players or sports heroes. Want the same "gear" as them.
- Lack sense of pace. They go flat out until they drop.
- Skeletal system growing rapidly. Often results in apparent lack of coordination.
- Cardiovascular and temperature regulation system is not developed. Their heart rate peaks quickly and they overheat quickly. Make sure that they get adequate water breaks.
- Limited understanding with personal evaluation. "If they try hard, they performed well" regardless of the actual performance. Thus, they need to be encouraged constantly, and asked "Now, can you do this?"
- Better at recognizing when the ball is out of play and remembering what goal they are going for... but, in the heat of battle, they will sometimes still forget. They still find it difficult to really be aware of more than one thing at a time.

How does the youth coach adapt?

- Keep them moving, but watch for overwork.
- Begin to introduce cooperative games in practice.
- Teach by encouraging. Correct positively.
- Avoid line drills.
- Keep the focus on skills, avoid abstract concepts.
- The US Soccer Curriculum is focused on Technique, to the exclusion of Tactics through the U-8 year.

CHARACTERISTICS OF U - 10 PLAYERS:

- Gross and small motor skills becoming more refined and reliable. " Boys and girls begin to develop separately.
- Ability to stay on task is lengthened. They have the ability to sequence thought and actions.
- Greater diversity in playing ability and physical maturity.
- Skills are emerging. Becoming more predictable and recognizable.
- Some children begin moving from concrete thinking to abstract thinking.
- Able to pace themselves, to plan ahead.
- Increased self-responsibility. They remember to bring their own equipment.

- Starting to recognize basic tactical concepts, but not exactly sure why certain decisions are better.
- Repetition of technique is very important, but it must be dynamic, not static.
- Continued positive reinforcement needed.
- Explanations must be brief, concise, and mention "why".
- Becoming more "serious". Openly, intensively competitive, without intention of fouling.
- Still mostly intrinsically motivated. Peer pressure starting to be a factor.
- Adult outside of the family may take on added significance.
- Prefer identification with a team. Like to have good uniforms, equipment, balls.
- More inclined towards wanting to play instead of being told to play. Will initiate play more.

How does the youth coach adapt?

- Skill refinement can occur in more challenging exercises
- Basic problem solving (2v1, 2v2) can be introduced
- Understanding the hows and whys of what you teach becomes more important!

CHARACTERISTICS OF U - 12 PLAYERS:

- They begin to develop the abilities to sustain complex, coordinated skill sequences.
- Some of the players have reached puberty. Girls, in general, arrive earlier than boys.
- Most players are able to think abstractly and are thus able to understand some team concepts that are foundational to the game.
- They are beginning to be able to address hypothetical situations, and to solve problems systematically.
- They are spending more time with friends and less time with their parents. They are susceptible to conformity to peer pressure.
- They are developing a conscience, morality and scale of values.
- Players tend to be highly self-critical. Instruction needs to be enabling. Show them what can be done instead of telling them what not to do.
- Although they are more serious with their play, they are still mainly involved because it is fun.
- They are openly competitive. A few may foul on purpose.
- They are looking towards their role models and heroes in order to know how to act.
- They have a more complex and developed sense of humor.

How does the youth coach adapt?

- Introduce small group tactics. Involve the players in solving the problems.
- Create a positive team environment to utilize peer pressure in a positive manner.
- Increase competitiveness of practice settings. More games with a winner at the end.
- Demonstrate actively (or use better players as demonstrators)

CHARACTERISTICS OF U - 14 PLAYERS:

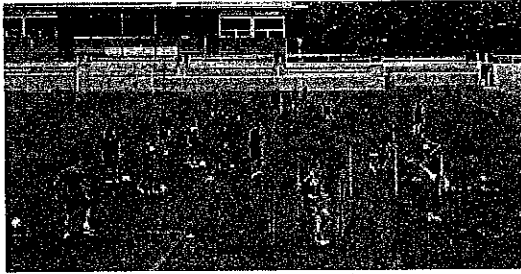
- All children are maturing at different rates
- Players need to warm-up and stretch - muscle pulls and other nagging injuries are common otherwise.
- Players will typically understand elemental abstract concepts and hypothetical situations.
- They like to solve problems.
- Peer evaluation is a constant.
- Egos are sensitive.
- Coordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt.
- Technique still needs to be reinforced constantly.
- Playing too much can lead to overuse injuries.
- Playing too much and not feeling like they have a choice in the matter can lead to burnout and drop-out.

How does the youth coach adapt?

- Emphasize importance of proper warm up and self-care.
- Continue developing the later bloomers. They may be your best players once they hit puberty.
- Introduce larger group and basic team tactics.
- Use the praise sandwich when correcting players.
- Keep asking the players to be creative and to take risks - we never want them to stop doing these things.

INTRODUCTION

Organization of player development by age and stage



Children do not learn in the same way as adults, especially when the learning process involves both intellectual and physical activity.

Age conditions the way a person perceives and interacts with the world and with others.

In any learning process, age is the key component in selecting appropriate content and methodology. Soccer is no different. For this reason we must not train 6 year old players the same way as 13 years old players. Training sessions must be adapted to the age of the players. Taking into consideration the characteristics of human and player development, we have structured the curriculum into four age groups. The first two age groups are:

1. INITIAL STAGE – 5 TO 8 YEARS OLD

At this age children do not have the same capacity as adults to analyze the environment. They explore and have an egocentric conception of the world. Children are still gathering the experience necessary to interact with their surroundings and with others. Also, empathy and the capacity to consider the thoughts and feelings of others is very low. In order to help children build their own experience, many exercises will be individual (e.g. each player will have a ball). The tactical component of the game will be reduced to small-sided games with basic explanations about space distribution. Training sessions will be treated more as physical education than specifically as soccer training.

2. BASIC STAGE – 9 TO 12 YEARS OLD

At this stage, the structure (but not the content) of the training sessions will be similar to that of older players. The main component of the training session will be technical. It is sensible at this age to develop technique and basic tactical understanding. Children's capacity to solve problems increases significantly. Therefore players will begin working on basic and dynamic tactical scenarios. At this stage, players are pre-pubescent and have important physical limitations in terms of strength and endurance.

3. INTERMEDIATE STAGE – 13 AND 14 YEARS OLD

Players at this age develop a good understanding of the game. However, these players are limited by their physical size and the significant changes, which arise with puberty. Safety should be the number one priority for the coach. The coach must be cautious to avoid overtraining should focus more on tactical and technical elements of the game and less on the physical aspects. Tactical training plays an important role at this age.

4. ADVANCED STAGE – 15 TO 18 YEARS OLD

Players at this age have completed most of their physical and mental development. All components of training can be combined and organized with the purpose of developing the highest potential of the player. The strength of the muscles helps to develop technique at high speed and this speed helps the player to react faster to tactical situations. This stage is crucial for combining all the components of soccer in order to increase the players' soccer knowledge.

These are some of the facts in terms of human development adapted to soccer. In this document these facts are used to develop the most appropriate training methodology for each age group.

PLAYER STAGES

Age groups organized by stage

PLAYER STAGES	
1. INITIAL STAGE	› U6 › U7 › U8
2. BASIC STAGE	› U9 › U10 › U11 › U12
3. INTERMEDIATE STAGE	› U13 › U14
4. ADVANCED STAGE	› U15 › U16 › U17 › U18
5. SPECIFIC STAGE	› U19 › U20
6. PERFORMANCE	› Senior

PRINCIPLES OF AGE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

Training characteristics based on human development

STAGES	AGE GROUPS	CHARACTERISTICS
INITIAL	U6	Very young players from 5 to 8 years of age love to play. Therefore, all practices should be based on fun games.
	U7	Players must spend the maximum time possible in contact with the ball and experiment by themselves. For the first time the player has to build a relationship with other players. Give different responsibilities to the players in order to develop a sense of team.
	U8	Basic motor skills like walking, running or jumping have to be combined with ball handling and ball control.
BASIC	U9	Pre-pubescent players from age 9 to 12 years have a special ability to learn. Therefore, this is the right age to work on specific soccer techniques and skills. Developing good technique is essential at this age.
	U10	1v1 and 2v1 attacking and defending situations are important to develop individual skills as well as the passing techniques to develop the necessary team game.
	U11	Use small-sided games to develop basic attacking and defensive principles. Other important aspects of tactical training are possession, combination play, transition and finishing in the final third, as well as zonal defending. Players will rotate in two or three different positions to avoid early specialization.
	U12	Speed, coordination, balance and agility are the main physical aspects to improve at this stage.
INTERMEDIATE	U13	At this stage, training sessions are orientated more toward tactics and the player will practice in bigger spaces. Players must practice all different types of techniques at this stage. Strength and endurance should be part of the fitness training. Coaching methods have to consider and preserve players' health since they will be experiencing many changes due to puberty at this stage. Warm-ups and cool downs are essential as is dynamic flexibility.
	U14	Players must develop discipline at this stage by following the instructions of the coach both during and outside training sessions.

PRINCIPLES OF AGE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

Training characteristics based on human development

STAGES	AGE GROUPS	CHARACTERISTICS
ADVANCED	U15	Tactical training and small-sided games are an essential part of the training at this stage. Attacking and defending principles must be part of all games. Important aspects of the tactical training are speed of play, quick transition, counter attacking and finishing in the final third, as well as pressing.
	U16	Technique will focus on speed and accuracy. Passing and finishing are two of the main techniques emphasized at this stage. Part of the technical training will be position-specific (e.g. defender: passing, center midfield players: receiving to turn and strikers: finishing).
	U17	The physical aspect of the game is key at this stage: endurance, strength and speed will be part of the weekly training routine.
	U18	Players should be expected to show commitment to the team, concentration in training sessions and competitiveness during the game.
SPECIFIC	U19	All tactical aspects of the game must be covered. Strategy and set pieces are now a major part of the training sessions.
	U20	The technical and physical work is based on explosive actions.
PERFORMANCE	SENIOR	Training methods will be adapted to the type of players and level of competition.

U.S. SOCCER
SIX TASKS OF A COACH

U.S. SOCCER SIX TASKS OF A COACH



1	Coaching Games (CG) Create an environment which supports and guides players toward giving their best contribution to the game in order to further develop and score more goals than the opponent.
2	Coaching Training Sessions (CTS) Facilitate an environment which supports and guides players on the field in order to develop them to their full potential as well as prepare players/the team for the game.
3	Leading the Team (LT) Create an environment of inclusion and engage players based on agreed upon team behaviors and goals.
4	Leading the Player (LP) Give players individual, unconditional attention and mentor them to fulfill their potential.
5	Managing the Performance Environment (MPE) Influence off-the-field circumstances and persons in order to create the best possible conditions for the development and performance of the players.
6	Leadership (L) Demonstrate coaching actions which are guided by a player-centered philosophy in order to accomplish defined team and player goals.

PROFILE OF THE GRASSROOTS COACH

THE PROFILE SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE U.S. SOCCER GRASSROOTS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK.



COACHING GAMES (CG) Create an environment which supports and guides players toward giving their best contribution to the game in order to further develop and score more goals than the opponent.

THE COACH IS ABLE TO:	OUTCOMES:
PRE-GAME	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">organize all necessary aspects of the game before it beginslink game preparation to prior training session goalscommunicate with individual players and the team relative to game objectivescommunicate with individual players and the team relative to game objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">every one involved is organizedthe game environment is safe and the team is ready to playthere is a connection between training and game objectivesplayers are informed and understand game objectivesplayers are informed and understand game objectives
GAME	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">create a safe, fun, inclusive and organized environment for playersdemonstrate a basic understanding of attacking, defending and transitionencourage and support players playing freely and making their own decisions in the gameapply the Player Development Initiatives for the age-group coachedread the game for the appropriate age groupgive players positive, specific, developmentally-appropriate and honest feedback at the appropriate momentsbalance silent observation with verbal feedbackbalance silent observation with verbal feedback	<p>PLAYERS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">demonstrate their understanding of the gameenjoy playingare safeplay with confidencefeel respected by and connected to one anotherthe grassroots roadmap is applied when reading the gameplayers play freely and make their own decisionsplayers improve as a result of playing the gameplayers play according to U.S. Soccer's Player Development Initiativesinformation about player & team behavior during the gameplayers are motivated and engageddesired behavior is reinforcedunsuccessful behavior is improvedplayers play freely and make their own decisionsplayers play freely and make their own decisions
POST-GAME	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">implement a short routine after each game to check players' well beinggive positive, basic and developmentally appropriate and honest feedback from the gameorganize the week ahead and say "good-bye" for the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">players are physically and emotionally stable following the gameplayers are motivated and engagedFeedback is based on game objectivesplayers/parents are informed
EVALUATING AND REFLECTING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">check if the outcomes have been achievedreflect on own behavior relative to desired outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">achieved outcomes based on the task of coaching gamescontinuous assessment of own impact on players and team

PROFILE OF THE GRASSROOTS COACH



COACHING TRAINING SESSIONS (CTS) Facilitate an environment which supports and guides players on the field in order to develop them to their full potential as well as prepare players/the team for the game.

THE COACH IS ABLE TO:	OUTCOMES:
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PREPARING

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • select a developmentally-appropriate "Play-Practice-Play" training session for the age-group/game model coached • implement a weekly plan for players based on the game model and age group coached • consider potential adaptations to the selected training session plan based on perceived player needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the selected training session meets the developmental needs of the players • a weekly plan • the training session meets the needs of the players |
|--|--|

EXECUTING

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check and adapt according to the five elements of a training session • create a safe, fun & developmentally-appropriate training environment • facilitate the selected training session to maximize activity time and minimize management/lecture time • demonstrate an understanding of attacking, defending and transition for the game model coached • encourage players to play freely and make their own decisions • give players positive, specific, developmentally-appropriate and honest feedback • celebrate players' successes and view mistakes as opportunities for learning • provide demonstrations • effectively guide players through mistakes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the five elements are checked during the training session • the training session is adapted, as necessary, to meet player needs • The training session is safe, fun & developmentally appropriate • the coach demonstrates an understanding of U.S. Soccer's Grassroots Player Development Philosophy • players participate in game-like activities for the majority of the training session • players understand what they are doing and why • players play freely and make their own decisions • interventions are limited and effective • players are motivated and engaged • desired behavior is reinforced • unsuccessful behavior is improved • players experience success and use mistakes as meaningful learning opportunities. • Errors are normalized • players see what it is they are being asked to do • players feel safe and learn through their mistakes |
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EVALUATING THE TRAINING SESSION WITH THE PLAYERS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement a short routine after each training session to check players' well being • give positive, specific, developmentally appropriate and honest feedback from the training session • organize the week ahead and say "good-bye" for the day | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • players' physical and emotional well-being is checked • motivated players • feedback is based on training objectives • informed players/parents |
|--|--|

EVALUATING AND REFLECTING

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check if the outcomes have been achieved • reflect on own behavior relative to desired outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achieved outcomes based on the task of coaching training sessions • continuous assessment of own impact on players and team |
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PROFILE OF THE GRASSROOTS COACH



LEADING THE TEAM (LT) Create an environment of inclusion and engage players based on agreed upon team behaviors and goals.

THE COACH IS ABLE TO:	OUTCOMES:
DEVELOPING A POSITIVE TEAM CULTURE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate an understanding of age-appropriate team values create a sense of team spirit & unity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> agreed upon team behaviors, based on the development stage of the players willingness of each player of the team to work together with loyalty and enthusiasm
EVALUATING AND REFLECTING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> check if the outcomes have been achieved reflect on own behavior relative to desired outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> achieved outcomes based on the task of leading the team continuous assessment of own impact on players and team

LEADING THE PLAYER (LP) Give players individual, unconditional attention and mentor them to fulfill their potential.

THE COACH IS ABLE TO:	OUTCOMES:
GUIDING PLAYERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the developmental stage of the age-group coached and recognize the relative ability level of the players unconditionally guide each player 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> players are coached based on their stage of development and ability level all players receive unconditional attention
EVALUATING AND REFLECTING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> check if the outcomes have been achieved reflect on own behavior relative to desired outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> achieved outcomes based on the task of leading the player continuous assessment of own impact on players and team

PROFILE OF THE GRASSROOTS COACH



MANAGING THE PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT (MPE) Influence off-the-field circumstances and persons in order to create the best possible conditions for the development and performance of the players.

THE COACH IS ABLE TO:	OUTCOMES:
ANALYZING THE CONDITIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• understand the performance environment and think of ways to positively influence it• understand & identify the key people and factors which influence the performance environment (e.g. parents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the performance environment is recognized and considered as it related to the players' experiences• factors and people which influence the performance environment are identified (e.g. parents)
CREATING AN OPTIMAL SITUATION FOR PERFORMANCE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• implement a plan for child safety & risk management• effectively manage the week to week routines for and with the team• build relationships with those who can influence the performance environment (e.g. parents)• delegate responsibilities to more effectively develop the team and its players	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• players are safe and risks are mitigated• the week to week routines are carried out• key people within the team environment are informed and engaged (e.g. parents)• tasks are shared among the coach, players and parents
EVALUATING AND REFLECTING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• check if the outcomes have been achieved• reflect on own behavior relative to desired outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• achieved outcomes based on the task of managing the performance environment• continuous assessment of own impact on players and team

PROFILE OF THE GRASSROOTS COACH



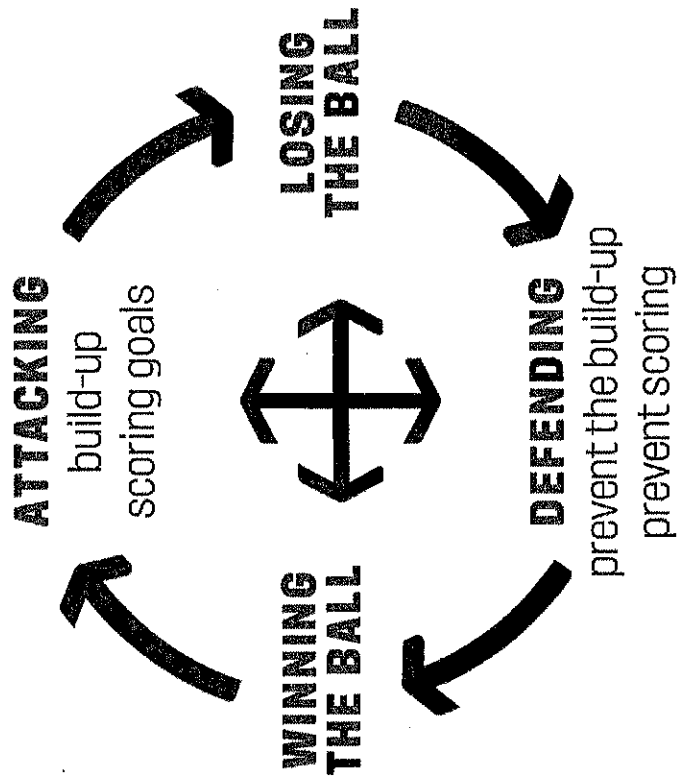
LEADERSHIP (L) Demonstrate coaching actions which are guided by a player-centered philosophy in order to accomplish defined team and player goals.

THE COACH IS ABLE TO:	OUTCOMES:
LEADING ONESELF	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• articulate a grassroots coaching philosophy• reflect on own performance and seek feedback from others• articulate own learning needs and take action to address them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a grassroots coaching philosophy• the coach practices reflection• the coach plans for further development and takes action to improve
LEADING OTHERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• be a role model in appearance and behavior within all team environments, on and off the field• lead the team in meetings, electronic communication and the practicing of digital citizenship (social media)• prevent, recognize and manage conflict effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the coach is a role model for others to follow• communication is effective and responsible• conflicts are reduced and compromises found
EVALUATING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• check if the outcomes have been achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• achieved outcomes based on the task of leadership

U.S. SOCCER
GRASSROOTS ROADMAP

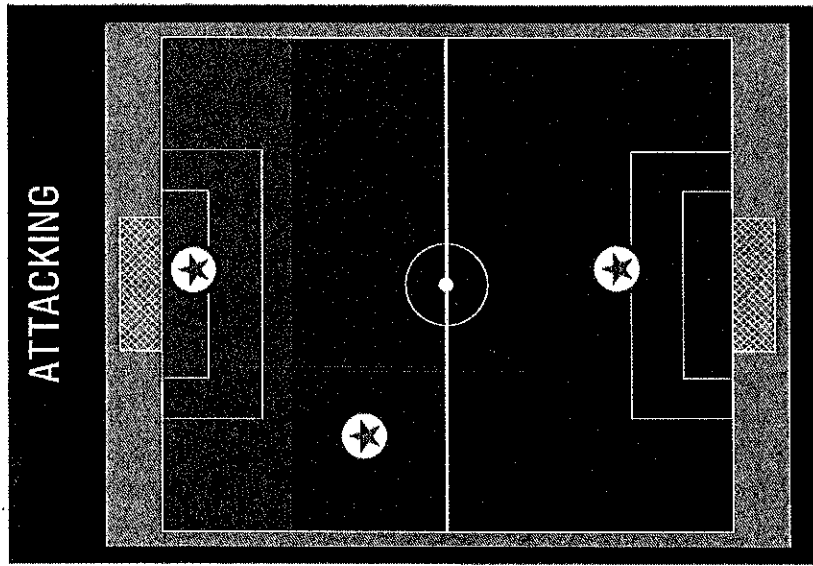


GRASSROOTS ROADMAP



ATTACKING

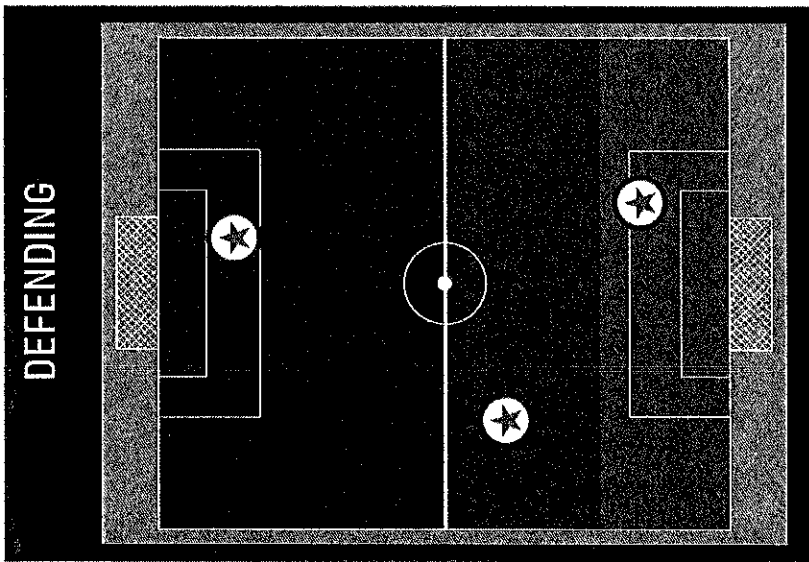
WHERE Where is it happening on the field?	WHY/GOAL Why do players attack? What are the goals?	HOW How are players going to accomplish the goals?	WHAT/PLAYER ACTIONS What can players do to achieve the How and the Why?	WHO/QUALITIES Who are these players? What qualities do they need to execute the actions?
Own half build up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move the ball forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find openings • Create openings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoot • Pass or dribble forward • Spread out • Create passing options • Support the attack • Create a 2v1 or 1v1 • Change the point of attack • Change the pace/rhythm • Switch positions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and understand the game and make decisions 2. Take initiative, be pro-active 3. Demonstrate focus 4. Execute with optimal technical abilities 5. Execute with optimal physical abilities 6. Take responsibility and accountability for their own development and performance
Opponents half build up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Chances 			
Close to the goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Score goals 			



Improve scoring goals (3)

Improve building up in opponent's half in order to create chances (2)

Improve building up from own half in order to move the ball to the opponent's half (1)



Improve preventing the opponent from building up in their own half (1)

Improve preventing the opponent from building up and creating chances in our half (2)

Improve preventing the opponent from scoring (3)

**1. READ AND UNDERSTAND THE GAME
AND MAKE DECISIONS**

- applies knowledge of the cuss
- reads and analyzes situations regarding attacking/defending/transition
- understands where and when to move themselves and the ball
- aligns own actions with other players and positions

2. TAKE INITIATIVE, BE PROACTIVE

- creates opportunities instead of reacting
- confronts situations
- challenges opponents

3. DEMONSTRATE FOCUS

- plays to win
- demonstrates bravery
- deals with adversity
- remains calm and composed

**4. EXECUTE WITH OPTIMAL
TECHNICAL ABILITIES**

- shows comfort with the ball
- is technically proficient to be effective
- is proficient in (v) situations to create or to regain the ball

**5. EXECUTE WITH OPTIMAL
PHYSICAL ABILITIES**

- demonstrates physical awareness (what their bodies can do)
- is coordinated in their movement

**6. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OWN
DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE**

- is involved and engaged throughout every game/training session
- delivers on agreements and promises
- is adaptable and flexible in dealing with (unexpected) challenges and problems
- articulates own learning needs
- evaluates and reflects on own performance

	4 v 4	7 v 7	9 v 9	11 v 11
	U-6, U-7, U-8	U-9, U-10	U-11, U-12	U-13+
ATTACKING	U-6 • Shoot • Pass or dribble forward • Spread out U7/U8 • Spread out • Create passing options • Support the attack	• Shoot • Pass or dribble forward • Spread out • Create passing options • Support the attack • Create a 2v1 or 1v1 • Change the point of attack • Change the pace/rhythm • Switch positions	• Shoot • Pass or dribble forward • Spread out • Create passing options • Support the attack • Create a 2v1 or 1v1 • Change the point of attack • Change the pace/rhythm • Switch positions	• Shoot • Pass or dribble forward • Spread out • Create passing options • Support the attack • Create a 2v1 or 1v1 • Change the point of attack • Change the pace/rhythm • Switch positions
A>D	DEFEND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE			
DEFENDING	U-6 • Protect the goal • Steal the ball U-7/U-8 • Make it compact • Keep it compact	• Protect the goal • Steal the ball • Make it compact • Keep it compact • Pressure, cover, balance • Outnumber the opponent	• Protect the goal • Steal the ball • Make it compact • Keep it compact • Pressure, cover, balance • Outnumber the opponent • Stay involved • Mark the player/mark the area	• Protect the goal • Steal the ball • Make it compact • Keep it compact • Pressure, cover, balance • Outnumber the opponent • Stay involved • Mark the player/mark the area
D>A	ATTACK AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE			

U.S. SOCCER
GRASSROOTS TRAINING SESSION MANUAL



FIRST PLAY PHASE

1	Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up the field according to the Play-Practice-Play training session plan. • Start with the final "play phase," then add "practice," then the first "play phase" inside of that. Think about how to transition from one phase to the next as quickly as possible. • Ask players to help, where appropriate.
2	Starting the first play phase with players arriving individually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome each player (and parent), individually. • When players arrive at different times, briefly explain the activity (30 seconds) and get them involved in first play phase (1v1, 2v1, 2v2, etc.). • If a single player arrives early, involve him/her in setting up or spend time together with the ball (unconditional attention).
3	Starting the first play phase with the whole team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring all players together to start the training session. • Think about your position and that of your players (sun/wind in your face, not theirs; use a circle/half circle where everyone is in the first row, etc.). • Collective welcome, brief explanation (30 seconds) of the first play activity: PEP: "picture," "explain," "play!"
4	Check and adapt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the "five elements of a training activity" from the training session plan, check the first four in sequential order (organized, game-like, repetition, challenging). • Adapt as necessary (clarify rules, adjust size of space, size of goals, numbers of players, balance the teams).
5	Key words and guided questions 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring players in (all together from various fields or address each field individually). • Once the first four elements have been checked, apply the fifth element (coaching) using the key words and guided questions from the training session plan. • No response needed, players continue playing to discover their own answers (e.g. "think about the following as you play, how can you create an opening?"). • This step should take no longer than one minute.
6	Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued observation based on the first four elements. • Guided question and key word reminders plus specific praise when players show desired behaviors based on the goal and objectives of the training session.
7	Key words and guided questions 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring players in (all together from various fields or address each field individually). • Same questions as #5 & #6. • This time players share their answers with the coach and/or each other. • Interact with players about the "why" of the desired behavior. • This step should take no longer than two minutes.
8	Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued observation • Key words and guided question reminders plus positive, specific reinforcement when players show desired behaviors based on the goal and objectives of the training session.



PRACTICE PHASE

9	Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly transition from first play phase to practice phase by organizing players, removing cones, adjusting goals, balls, etc. • Involve players, e.g. make a game out of it.
10	Starting the first practice phase activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about your position and that of your players (sun/wind in your face, not theirs; use a circle/half circle where everyone is in the first row, etc.). • Review the key word(s) from first play phase so players recognize the connection to what they did earlier. • Brief explanation/demonstration of the first practice exercise: PEP: "picture," "explain," "play!" • This step should take no longer than one minute.
11	Observation/adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the "five elements of a training activity" from the training session plan, observe the first four in sequential order (organized, game-like, repetition, challenging). • Adapt as necessary (clarify rules, adjust size of space, size of goals, numbers of players, balance the groups).
12	Key words and guided questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring players in (all together from various fields or address each field individually). • Once the first four elements have been checked, apply the fifth element (coaching) using key words and guided questions from the training session plan. • Interact with players about the "why" of the desired behavior
13	Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued observation based on the first four elements. • Pay closer attention to elements #3 and #4 (repetition and challenge). Observe the balance between successful and unsuccessful actions as well as the numbers of opportunities players get to experience the goals and objectives of the training session. • Adapt as necessary (clarify rules, adjust size of space, size of goals, numbers of players, balance the groups). • Apply the fifth element (coaching) using key words and guided questions reminders plus specific praise when players show the desired behavior.
14	Additional teaching interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Coach's Tool kit (see document). • Players must be able to see and hear the coach/each other. • Provide a demonstration (e.g. technical focus). • Use teaching interventions when appropriate throughout the practice phase. • This should take no longer than two minutes.
15	Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued observation based on the first four elements. • Pay closer attention to elements #3 and #4 (repetition and challenge). Observe the balance between successful and unsuccessful actions as well as the numbers of opportunities players from both teams/ groups get to experience the goals and objectives of the training session. • Adapt as necessary (clarify rules, adjust size of space, size of goals, numbers of players, balance the groups). • Apply the fifth element (coaching) using key words and guided questions reminders plus specific praise when players show the desired behavior.
16	Collective summary of practice phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about your position and that of your players (sun/wind in your face, not theirs; use a circle/half circle where everyone is in the first row, etc.). • Recap the practice phase (takeaways based on key words and answers to guided questions). • Interact with players about the "why" of the desired behavior. • This should take no longer than two minutes.



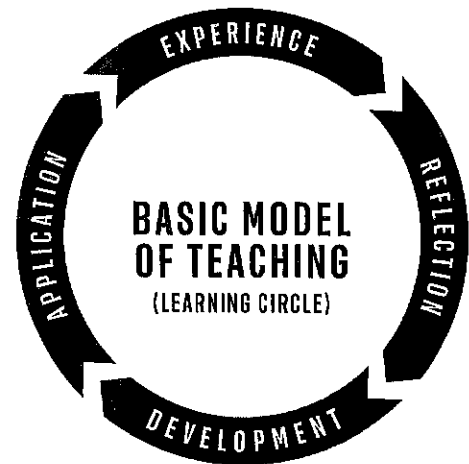
SECOND PLAY PHASE

17	Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly transition from practice to second play phase by organizing players, removing cones, adjusting goals, balls, etc. • Involve players, e.g. make a game out of it.
18	Starting the second play phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about your position and that of your players (sun/wind in your face, not theirs; use a circle/half circle where everyone is in the first row, etc.) • Review the key word(s) from the practice phase so players recognize the connection to what they did earlier. • Brief explanation (30 seconds) of the second play phase: PEP: "picture," "explain," "play!" • No referee (players take responsibility for their own game in applying the Laws of the Game).
19	Coaching in the flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key word and guided question reminders plus specific praise when players show the desired behavior (based on the goal and objectives of the training session).
20	'Halftime talk'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective evaluation of the first half. • Select appropriate key word(s) & guided question(s) from the training session, based on first half observations. • Players answer. • Interact with players about the "why" of the desired behavior. • This should take no longer than five minutes.
21	Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided question and key word reminders, plus praise when players show the desired behavior.
22	Collective summary of the training session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective evaluation of the training session. • Check for understanding using questions focused on the key words. • Players share answers with the coach and/or each other. • Interact with players about the "why" of the desired behavior.
23	Ending the session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect all equipment, involve players. • Positive, specific feedback, organize players for week ahead, say goodbye to players and parents (unconditional attention).



ON THE FIELD

WHAT - TEACHING ACTIONS	PURPOSE OF THE ACTION	WHEN - THE MOMENT OF APPLICATION
CHECK - ADAPT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe and check the created situation on the field, adapt if necessary based on the Five Elements of a Training Activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
GIVE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce effective actions in order to use it again in similar situations Motivate players 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the flow (sideline coaching) Planned stoppage (break) Natural stoppage (ball out of bounds) In the situation (freeze)
USE OF KEY WORDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and support players to focus on cues and/or desired behavior 	<p>The application of coaching actions can be a single action or combined actions during different moments.</p>
ASK QUESTIONS (and collect answers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use guided questions to force players to think about cues and/or desired behavior Check for understanding Reflect 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the situation (freeze): combination of demonstration, Q&A and feedback Planned stoppage (break): Q&A and encourage players to focus them
DEMONSTRATE (player and/or coach)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model desired behavior Visualize the situation Check for understanding 	
GIVE FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect information on players' behavior related to the objective of the activity 	
COMMAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell players what to do 	
APPLY THE LEARNING CIRCLE (as a concept)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a combination of coaching observation and player reflection to get players thinking about and/or modeling the desired behavior and applying their newly learned abilities 	



**BASIC TRAINING
TECHNIQUES**

COACHING THE BASIC TECHNIQUES

The section will acquaint the coaching staff with the coaching points for the basic techniques our players need to learn. As a staff, it is important that we are consistent in emphasizing these points. A player should not experience two different coaches explaining the technical coaching points differently. The techniques do not change as players get older. Good fundamental technique at age 8 will still be correct at age 18 or 28! Moreover, the earlier a player learns proper technique, the sooner they will be able to use that technique to execute tactics and strategy. There is an old saying that "practice makes permanent." If a player is practicing technique incorrectly, those habits will become ingrained and much more difficult to correct as a player gets older. Technical training does not stop at a young age. Even professional players work on their technique daily. Performing the same basic techniques faster, in tighter spaces and under increased opposition are the hallmarks of technical training as players get older.

As coaches, we must understand the basic coaching points for each technique we teach. This section of the curriculum will cover the coaching points for:

1. Passing
 - a. Inside of Foot
 - b. Outside of Foot
 - c. Instep
2. Dribbling
3. Receiving the Ball
 - a. On the ground
 - b. From the Air
 - i. Feet
 - ii. Thigh
 - iii. Chest
4. Shooting
5. Heading
6. Tackling
7. Shielding

PASSING TECHNIQUE

The coaching points for passing the ball are fairly consistent regardless of the type of pass you are looking to make. There are slight variations depending on the surface of the foot you are using or if you are trying to drive a long pass through the air or chip a ball up to a target player or area. However, with our younger players we'll focus first on learning to properly pass a ball on the ground with all three surfaces of the foot. In successfully executing a pass, we are concerned about four things: direction, power (or pace), control and accuracy.

Direction is dictated by where your hips face when you strike the ball. Players should be taught to get their hips to their target. A good indicator of the direction of the hips is where the plant foot is pointed!

Power comes from the backswing, both the distance and speed of its approach to the ball.

Control is created by locking the ankle when the ball is struck. This creates a solid and firm tool to strike the ball. You wouldn't use a rubber handle to hammer nails; don't use a rubber foot to pass!

Accuracy is a product of the follow through. Players should be trained to follow through to their target.

Coaching Points

1. Plant foot should be even with ball and far enough away for the kicking leg to swing freely.
2. Plant foot should be pointed to target to assure that the player's hips are aimed at the target.
3. Lock your ankle before striking the ball. The method of locking the ankle depends on the surface of the foot you are passing with.
 - a. Inside of Foot: Toe up and out (see picture)
 - b. Outside of Foot: Toe down and in
 - c. Instep: Toe Down
4. Head and Knee slightly over ball at contact to keep it on ground
5. Strike firmly through the center of the ball. Kick through the ball. Passes should be made with pace!
6. Follow through to your target.



Ankle Locked - Toe Up and Out

Players should learn and be confident in completing short passes on the ground using all three surfaces of the foot. Training should progress to include longer passes through the air. With our younger players, we want them to completely master inside of the foot passing. Inside of the foot passing is the most accurate and reliable passing technique. It should become second nature.

RECEIVING AND CONTROLLING THE BALL

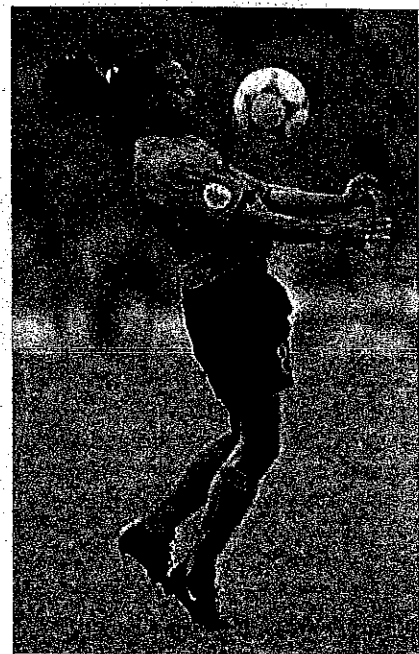
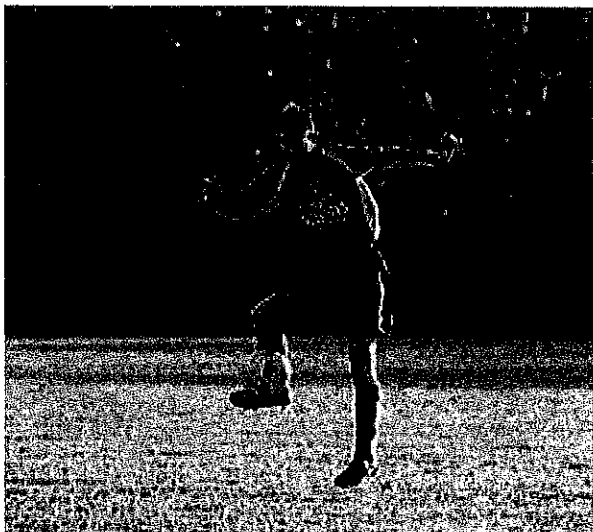
Receiving and controlling the ball is another key component to creating an effective passing possession game. It will not matter how accurate your passes are if your teammate is unable to control the ball when it comes to him. You may have heard receiving and controlled referred to as "trapping" the ball. We want to eliminate the usage of the term trapping, as it implies bringing a ball to a stop. Our emphasis on receiving the ball is to control it and at the same time prepare it to be played quickly. The ball should keep moving. A stopped ball is a friend to the defense. As an attacking team, we aim to keep the ball moving and ready to be played.

Coaching Points

1. Move your body (hips) in line with the ball before it arrives
2. Prepare and present the controlling surface early
3. Look at the field before the ball arrives to understand where there are defenders and where there is space to play.
4. Withdraw the surface as the ball arrives in the direction the ball is traveling. Some coaches also suggest a small "hop" as contact is made.
5. Prepare the ball to be played again with a minimum number of contacts.

A more advanced coaching point is to protect the ball on the first touch by putting it into space or placing your body between the ball and defender.

Players should learn to receive balls on the ground using the inside and outside of the foot. The sole of the shoe should not be a primary receiving area, although there are limited and specific uses for receiving the ball with the sole of the foot. Players should also learn to receive balls out of the air using their feet, thighs, and chest.



SHOOTING TECHNIQUE

Much as dribbling is often overlooked in the effort to developing a passing possession style, so too shooting often is minimized in training. Remember, the objective of the game is to score more goals than the other team. Every practice session should incorporate some shooting, even if shooting technique is not your emphasis for that training session.

As a nation, we must develop confident and capable scorers. Meeting that goal starts right here, with U6, U8 and U10 soccer players. Kids love to shoot; they love to score. If you put a group of kids unsupervised on a field with a goal, the chances are they will start taking shots, not playing 3v3 or other mini-games. As a coach, capture and nurture that enthusiasm for shooting.

We look to train players to shoot with the instep. Emphasis is as much on accuracy as it is on power. If the shot is not on the frame, it won't go in. Shooting with the instep is very similar to passing with the instep.

Coaching Points

1. The ball should be struck with the instep (the hard bone on top of the foot)
2. The player should strike through the center of the ball. Keep your head down and still to strike the ball cleanly
3. At contact, the player's knee should be over the ball to keep it low.
4. The shooter's hips should be aimed at the target.
5. Power is generated from backswing and the speed of the leg snap forward through the ball.
6. At contact the ankle must be locked with the toe down. It may help younger players understand locking the ankle if you tell them to push their big toe down through the bottom of their shoe.
7. The follow through should be to the target with the toe still pointed down. Don't unlock the ankle too soon.



Hips aimed at target. Head is down and stationary

Follow through is at the target, not across the body. Toe stays down.

HEADING TECHNIQUE

A player that cannot head the ball or play a ball in the air is at a 50% disadvantage to the opponent who possesses those skills. The player who will not or cannot play with their head essentially concedes control of the ball anytime it is more than 3-4 feet off the ground, which is an increasingly longer period of time as players get older. Trained properly, heading is safe, relatively easy and pain free.

Coaching Points:

1. Eye on the ball – read flight of ball
2. Move your body in line of flight of the ball.
3. Contact of the ball is on the upper forehead.
4. Feet should be positioned forward and back just ahead of and behind the torso
5. Ball should be contacted in the "power zone" which is between the front and back foot. This lets you use of upper body and legs to generate power.
6. Chin should be tucked at contact and come forward as the ball is struck.
7. The player should time their jump to attack ball at highest point – just before your opponent.



Chin Tucked at contact



Ball headed through "power zone"

TACKLING TECHNIQUE

Coaching of defensive tackling techniques is often overlooked. At a minimum all of our players should become familiar with the technique for block tackling. Block tackling is the "one on one" defensive technique used when a defender is faced up with an attacker. A sound tackler can change possession quickly and often help your team transition to the attack.

Coaching Points

1. Approaching a tackle, the defenders head should be steady and his eyes on the ball to prevent falling victim to feints or fakes.
2. The non-kicking foot should be placed alongside the ball.
3. The ankle joint of the tackling foot must be firm and locked.
4. The knees should be bent to lower the center of gravity of the player. This will produce a compact and more powerful shape.
5. The head and upper body should be over the ball.
6. Contact is made with the inside of the foot. Contact on the ball should be made through the horizontal mid-line and center of the ball. If your foot is too low the attacker can easily push the ball over your foot. Put weight forward hard through the ball.
7. If the ball doesn't move in the challenge, can you get your body between opponent and ball quickly to secure possession?
8. Quality tackling is as much an attitude as it is technique. Players must develop an aggressive attitude towards winning the ball.

Common mistakes to watch for in coaching the block tackle include:

1. Players poking at the ball and attempting a tackle with their foot out in front of their body. Apart from not providing any force to dislodge the ball, this technique leaves the defender at risk of injury.
2. Players leaving their feet to win a block tackle. Block tackles are usually not emergency situations that require sliding. If a player goes to the ground and the ball rebounds toward your goal, the defender is unable to attempt to win the ball again.



The players to the left are challenging for a ball with block tackle technique. Their foot position is good but neither of them have their weight forward. If just one of them had gotten forward into the tackle, she would easily have won the challenge.

SHIELDING TECHNIQUE

A player in possession of the ball is often faced with a situation where they cannot immediately make a pass to their teammate. Although those players will be trained to dribble for possession, if there is no space and defensive pressure limits their movement, they may have to shield to ball to protect it until passing opportunities can be created. Protection of the ball is the most important task of a player who must shield the ball from a defender.

Coaching Points

1. Shielding players should be on their toes to change position quickly.
2. When shielding, the player must keep their body in between the ball and the defender.
3. Players should take a wide stance and low center of gravity to make it more difficult to move them off the ball.
4. Players should use their natural space, moving their arms off their sides and stiffening them to spread themselves out and create more space away from the defenders.

Common mistakes to look for when coaching shielding include:

1. Player holding the ball on the foot nearest the defender.
2. Player goes "flat" and lets the defender onto his back.
3. Player holds the ball inside his body, where the defender can poke it away.
4. While maneuvering, the player exposes the ball to the defender.
5. The player takes to erect a posture, making him easily moved by the defender.



This player is using the full width of his body, plus creating space with his arm, and holding the ball outside his body to keep it away from the defender. Well done!

The player to the right is holding the ball inside her body and on the foot closest to the defender. She is also more straight up than the player above. She will likely be dispossessed of the ball.

