



Development Curriculum

For Players

Tar River Youth Soccer Association

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Section 1 – The Basics

There are 4 core components needed to be a top-level soccer player. These components are technique, tactics, fitness, and psychology. Each component must be emphasized and prioritized by the coach appropriately for the age group and skill level of the players. The coach must continue to evaluate whether the development of a player is encompassing all 4 components and adjust to ensure that the player becomes well-rounded and capable of success at increasingly higher competition levels. Failure to develop a player in any of these categories will produce a player incapable of reaching their full potential.

Technique is the “*how*” in soccer. It is the foundation from which to build on. It should be the primary focus of the development at the youngest ages, but also continue throughout their entire career. This includes things as simple as how to run, turn, and jump. As players grow they will be asked to perform more and more complex techniques properly. Players without good technique will plateau well before their peers so this will be a large portion of their development throughout their years playing club soccer.

Tactics are the “*when, where, with whom and against whom*”. For teams to have sound tactics in the older age groups, each of their players to have a solid understanding of the responsibilities of each position on the field. That is why it’s important for coaches give their players opportunities to play multiple positions at the younger age groups. This forces players to solve different types of problems and understand the challenges faced in different positions.

Fitness is more than just physically being able to exert energy for long periods of time without getting excessively tired. It requires strength, balance, speed, agility, and endurance both physically and mentally. At the highest level in our club a player will need to be able to perform at a high level for a full 90 minutes. That requires a great deal of physical fitness, but also mental fitness. A player will make hundreds of decisions in every game with stimuli coming from everywhere. Our coaches need to understand how to develop the player’s ability to block out the noise, take in the needed information, process it, and make sound decisions in a very short amount of time. Teams that don’t physically get tired, can process information, and make decisions faster than the opponent will have a tactical advantage right away.

Psychology is the mental characteristics of the player. A player’s psychological development has a lot to do with the environment created around them. Coaches have a responsibility to create an environment that encourages self-discovery, creativity, and builds confidence in the player. Coaches need to talk to their parents about how important it is to create an environment where the player can thrive. This will produce a player that knows what they are good at, is willing to try new things, and not afraid of failure.

Each of the components are equally important like the legs of a table. If a table has one weak leg, then when the pressure is applied to that leg the table will topple no matter how strong the other three legs are. Coaches must be certain that each component is developed according to what’s most needed at different ages and competition levels so that the building blocks are present when the player transitions to their next phase of development.

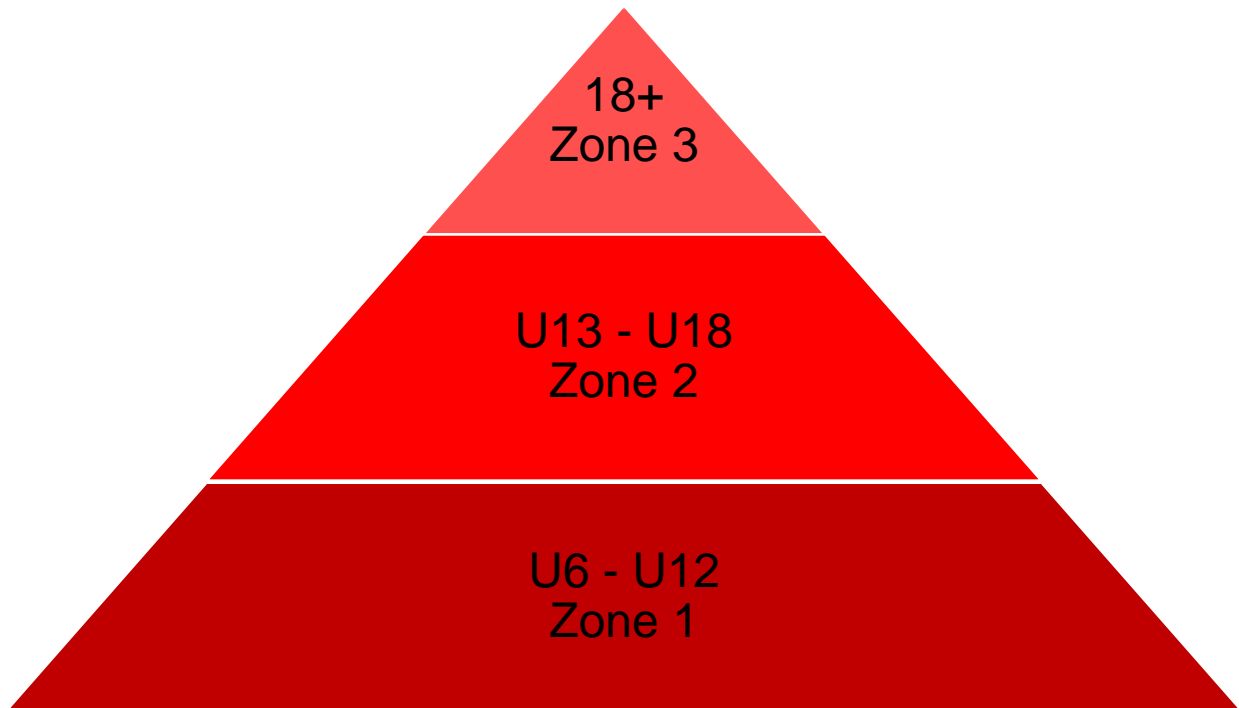


Figure 1 - Player Development Pyramid

The development responsibilities for our TRYSA coaches reside in Zones 1 & 2

Zone 1 – In this zone the emphasis is on the technical aspects of player development as opposed to match results. These are the players in the recreation, academy, and our first year select level teams. In Zone 1 players learn ball skills, the laws of the game, and general team principles. The measurement of success in Zone 1 is if all the players are developing appropriately.

Zone 2 – In this zone the primary focus shifts from the individual to team development. At this stage there should be more training sessions and fewer matches. It's at this point that coaches need to start teaching the details of team tactics, formations, and strategies. The measurement of success in Zone 2 is how well the team plays together and that the players are all continuing to develop.

Zone 3 – Players that reach Zone 3 are often going on to play in college, youth national teams, professional teams, etc. At this point the focus should be on both match results and match performance.

Our job as TRYSA coaches is to do our best to develop each player to their full potential so they can progress through each development phase and zone. Eventually moving beyond our club to Zone 3. We cannot let match results keep us from properly developing players. This can be difficult since many people see success in wins and losses. Communicate with parents and players regularly to remind them of what our primary goal should be.

Section 2 – The Stages of Development

6U – Me & My Ball – At this stage the focus should be on individual skills. The primary focus should be on building control of their bodies. It starts with the basic skills like running, jumping, changing directions, balance, quickness, etc. Ball skills are the secondary focus, but still important. Players need to begin being comfortable with the ball coming towards them on the ground and at their feet. Most kids at this age are very egocentric so a lot of time can be wasted on trying to get players to pass to each other. Don't fall into the trap. At this point you are mainly facilitating their self-discovery.

6U – Core 4 in order of priority

1. **Fitness:** Introduce the idea of how to warm-up and movement education. Begin with light activity to warm the muscles and then stretching Work on balance, walking, running, how to start and stop, jumping, hopping, rolling, skipping, changing direction, bending, twisting and reaching.
2. **Technique:** Dribbling (Start, Stop, Turn) and shooting with the inside of the foot. Experiment with the qualities and trapping of a rolling ball.
3. **Psychology:** Sharing, fair play, parental involvement, “how to play” and emotional management.
4. **Tactics:** Where is the field? The concept of boundary lines, at which goal to shoot and playing with the ball wherever it may go.

Typical 6U Training Session

- No longer than 45 minutes.
- Every player should have a ball for every practice
- Free play warm up and Soccernastics – 15 minutes
- Game-like activities focusing on body and ball control. “Maze Games” – 15 Minutes
- Finish facing opponents – 1 v 1, 2 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 2, 3 v 3 with goals – 15 Minutes

** Maze Games - activities that give a player the opportunity to move in a full range of motion with or without the ball. There is a defined area, but no defined targets to go towards. Players are forced to make decisions within a defined area while moving in all directions.

** Soccernastics - fun activities with or without the ball that challenge the player's coordination, balance, flexibility, creativity, and ball skill.

8U – Me & My Partner – The top priority for all coaches at this age group is to “ignite a passion for the game”. The emphasis on good body control should continue and expand to include the ball more. At this point coaches should encourage the use of both feet to perform skills and give high praise to players who try to use both feet. Many training activities should be done in pairs to begin fostering communication, cooperation, and teamwork. Passing should be introduced as an alternative to dribbling. Players at this age are very into imitation so bringing in older kids to demonstrate skills is a good idea.

8U – Core 4 in order of priority

- 1. Technique:** Experiment with the qualities of a rolling or spinning ball. Introduce ball lifting, juggling, block tackle, receiving ground balls with the inside and sole of the foot, shooting with the inside of the foot, catching, throwing, shooting and dribbling while changing direction. Introduce the push pass.
- 2. Fitness:** Agility, eye-foot and eye-hand coordination, balance, leaping, bounding, tumbling, warm-up activities and movement education.
- 3. Psychology:** Encourage working in pairs, sportsmanship, parental involvement, how to play, emotional management, creativity, dynamic activities, and participation of all players in a safe and fun environment. There is still a short attention span unless the player has peaked (keep interest high). Like to show what they can do – encourage trying new things. Developing self-esteem – activities should foster positive feedback and attainable positive success.
- 4. Tactics:** Back line and forward line, 1v1 attack and choosing to dribble or pass. Introduce the names of positions (fullbacks and forwards). Institute games of 2v1, 1v2 and 2v2, playing with the ball with a purpose and promote problem solving.

Typical 8U Training Session

- No longer than 60 minutes.
- Every player should have a ball for every practice
- Free play warm up with a ball. Dynamic stretching and Soccernastics – 15 minutes
- A mixture of individual and partner activities. Use “Maze Games” and “Target Games” involving a variety of player combinations (2 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 2, etc.). – 25 Minutes
- Finish with a small sided game to goals, but no goal keepers – 20 Minutes

** Maze Games - activities that give a player the opportunity to move in a full range of motion with or without the ball. There is a defined area, but no defined targets to go towards. Players are forced to make decisions within a defined area while moving in all directions.

** Target Games - activities that involve solving the objective by going from point A to B. In contrast to maze games, these activities are more directionally defined and can be done with and without the ball.

** Soccernastics - fun activities with or without the ball that challenge the player’s coordination, balance, flexibility, creativity, and ball skill.

10U – Me & My Group – At this age the emphasis needs to be placed on skill development using a games-based approach. These players start to move from the *how* (technique) to the *when, where, with whom* and *against whom* (Tactics). Coaches are now responsible with being able to teach soccer instead of just being a facilitator. Become a student of the game so you can teach the players.

10U – Core 4 in order of priority

1. **Technique:** Experiment with the qualities of a bouncing ball and running with the ball, passing with the inside and outside of the foot (emphasis on quality push pass), instep drive, receiving ground balls with the instep and outside of foot (body behind the ball), receiving bouncing balls with the instep (cushion) and the sole, inside and outside of foot (wedge), feints in dribbling and turning with the ball. Introduce crossing the ball. Practice throw-ins. **For goalkeepers:** ready stance, getting the feet set, how to hold a ball after a save, diamond grip, catching shots at the keeper, punting, recovery from down to the ground and up to set position and footwork exercises. Also introduce goal kicks and throwing.
2. **Psychology:** Keep soccer enjoyable to foster a desire to play using self-motivation. Working in groups of three, four or five, stay focused for one entire half. There is an increase in responsibility, sensitivity, awareness of how to win or lose gracefully, fair play, parental involvement, how to play, communication and emotional management.
3. **Fitness:** Factors are endurance, range of motion flexibility, rhythm exercises and running mechanics. Any fitness activities must be done with the ball. Introduce body resistance exercises and the idea of cool down.
4. **Tactics:** 1v1 defending, roles of 1st attacker and defender, 2v1 attacking, what it means to get goal-side, small group shape in pairs and threes (emphasize support on both attack and defense), playing on and around the ball as a group with purpose, playing a variety of positions to develop the complete player, introduce the principles of attack and set plays.

Typical 10U Training Session

- No longer than 75 minutes.
- Small Group warm up with a ball (4 to 6 player groups) – 15 minutes
- Directional Games (play to targets or zones) – 25 minutes
- Small Sided games to goal with goal keepers – 25 Minutes
- Cool down & Stretching – 10 Minutes

** Directional Games - activities that have groups of players working together to reach a target or zone. There is a defined area and targets/zones for teams to attack or defend. Players should be forced to make decisions and transition from attack to defense quickly. Areas and targets/zones are not your typical goals on a field. These games require players to think outside of attacking or defending goals placed on the center of the goal line at each end of the area.

** Feints – A “fake” done only with the body, no contact with the ball until the player in possession finally plays the ball. A feint could be done with almost any part of the body.

12U – Me & My Team – This is a pivotal stage in the development of players. Many players at this point are deciding how serious they want to be about soccer. It's important that coaches establish discipline from the beginning and set the example for players to imitate. Players at this age can make significant improvements technically & tactically as they become even more athletic and desire being part of a successful team. Players should be challenged to be able to perform skills and/or make good decisions under the limitation of time. Training should be at high tempo and high pressure as much as possible. Coaches should use a lot of 4 v 4 games where players learn to create numerical advantages.

12U – Core 4 in order of priority

1. **Technique:** Foot drag throw-in, master the qualities of a bouncing spinning ball. Experiment with the qualities of a flighted ball, feints with the ball, receiving bouncing and air balls with the thigh and chest, first touch receiving, outside of foot passing, receiving with either foot, short passing with both feet, bending shots, crossing to near post space and penalty spot space and heel and flick passing. Introduce half volley and volley shooting, chipping to pass and slide tackle. **For goalkeepers:** W grip, footwork, underarm bowling, side-arm throwing to targets, taking own goal kicks, low and forward diving and angle and near post play. Introduce deflecting and boxing.
2. **Tactics:** 2v1 attacking and defending, 2v2 attacking and defending, roles of 2nd attacker and defender, man-to-man defense, combination passing, playing on and around the ball as a group with purpose, verbal and visual communication for all positions, halftime analysis, general work on all restarts, wall pass at a variety of angles, passing combinations on the move and rotation of all players through the team – everyone plays in each position. **For goalkeepers:** positional play, basic angle play, move into and down the line of the flight of the ball, commanding the goalmouth, communication, and positioning during a penalty kick.
3. **Psychology:** Keep it fun and enjoyable to foster a desire to play, self-motivation. Focus on teamwork, confidence, desire, mental skills, handling distress, how to learn from each match, fair play, parental involvement and emotional management (discipline).
4. **Fitness:** Fitness work continues to be done with the ball. Strength can be improved with body resistance and aerobic exercises. Also focus on agility at speed (sharp turns), acceleration, deceleration, reaction speed, range of motion exercises, proper warm-up and cool-down. Including static stretching in the cool-down is recommended now.

Typical 12U Training Session

- No longer than 90 minutes.
- Warm up, Dynamic Stretching, Range of Motion Stretching, Group Activity – 20 minutes
- Directional Games (play to targets or zones) – 25 minutes
- Small Sided games to goal with goal keepers – 35 Minutes
- Cool down & Static Stretching – 10 Minutes

** Feints – A “fake” done only with the body, no contact with the ball until the player in possession finally plays the ball. A feint could be done with almost any part of the body.

14U – Commitment Phase – At this point players have typically made the decision to play soccer recreationally, or pursue higher levels. Players will begin to gravitate towards certain groups on the field (Goal Keepers, Defenders, Midfielders, Attackers). Tactics become a much larger part of the game, but technique still needs to be the top priority. Coaches are expected to know the tactics of positions, formations, situations, etc. and be able to teach them to the players. Training sessions must become more intense to prepare players for playing under higher amounts of pressure for an entire match. Discipline, focus, and hard work should be required of all players always. Stay enthusiastic and promote creativity. Set clear and realistic goals for training. Give regular feedback on whether players are achieving them or not.

14U – Core 4 in order of priority

1. **Technique:** Experiment with the qualities of a flighted ball, i.e.: spin, swerve, chipping to pass, bending passes and driving crosses to the far post and top of the penalty area. Also, practice half volley and volley shooting, slide tackles, heading to score goals and for clearances while standing or jumping, heading to pass, flick headers, diving headers, receiving with the outside of the instep, outside of foot shot, receiving bouncing and air balls with the head, dummy the ball and shoulder charge. Introduce chipping to shoot.
For goalkeepers: far post play, collapse save, step and save, step power and save, save/reaction save/recovery save, medium and high diving, deflecting over the crossbar and around the posts, boxing and catching crosses, reading crosses (when to come and when to stay), half volley (drop kick), kick saves, long over-arm throws, saving penalty kicks and angle play.
2. **Psychology:** assertiveness, tension control, self and team discipline, able to stay focused for an entire match, sportsmanship, parental involvement, how to play, mental focusing techniques, emotional management and self-regulation.
3. **Tactics:** Individual and group tactics including delay, depth and balance in defense. Compactness, role of 3rd defender, how to make recovery and tracking runs. Playing on, around and away from the ball with purpose. Responding to restart situations. How to defend in each part of the field. How to play in the attacking half. Checking runs, take-overs, switching positions during the flow of play, zone defense and post-match analysis.
For goalkeepers: taking command of the goal area, provide support on the attack out to the back line, distance of support to the defense, organization during a corner kick, setting the wall at free kicks and 1v1 with the defense and communication.
4. **Fitness:** acceleration, speed, anaerobic exercise, cardio respiratory and cardiovascular training, flexibility – static stretching (particularly in the cool-down), lateral movement and all fitness work with the ball. Player education about nutrition and introduce the concept of rest for recovery.

Typical 14U Training Session

- No longer than 90 minutes.
- Warm up, Dynamic Stretching, Range of Motion Stretching, Group Activity – 15 minutes
- Directional and Target games (4 v 4, 5 v 5, 6 v 6) – 30 minutes
- Small Sided Games to goals (7 v 7, 8 v 8) – 35 minutes
- Cool Down & Static Stretching – 10 minutes

Group players for games according to typical position (defender, midfielder, attacker)

16U – Dedication Phase – These players tend to be mentally tough and self-confident. Their bodies will now respond to overload/stressing to build strength, quickness, and power. Supplemental physical training should be part of their monthly training plan. Coaches must foster team spirit and develop the concept of team before self for overall team success. Training must be economical to get the most out of each session. Players being able to make sound tactical decisions becomes critical since many games will hinge on a few tactical decisions by players. Player injury prevention becomes more important because the players are now more powerful and do things with higher velocity. USYS recommends the FIFA 11+ injury prevention program. Player nutrition also becomes more important. Coaches should be encouraging good dieting and hydrations to maximize performance. Training sessions should be high intensity for long periods and short periods of rest. Training games should expose players to a variety of game situations and always include a transition component. Get players understanding “numbers up” or “numbers down” tactical adjustments. Continue to refine the tactical application of techniques.

16U – Core 4 in order of priority

1. **Tactics:** Should be developing the ability to adapt tactics during the flow of play and key players should be able to dictate the rhythm of the game. Practice playing on, around and away from the ball with purpose. Further develop group tactics, the role of the 3rd attacker, principles of attack and defense, diagonal passing, dribbling and off-the-ball runs, wing play, overlapping runs, defending in the midfield and attacking thirds, all possible set plays, match analysis and switching the point of attack. **For goalkeepers:** command out to the penalty spot, initiate the attack, provide support on the attack to the fullbacks, recognize pressure on and off the ball and team organization when defending against free kicks
2. **Psychology:** personal accountability, drive, courage, sacrifice to achieve one’s best, sportsmanship, parental involvement, how to play, emotional management and communication
3. **Fitness:** power, vertical jump, body composition, plyometric exercise, 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
4. **Technique:** Chipping to score and airborne kicking: forward volley, scissors volley and bicycle kick. **For goalkeepers:** backwards diving, saving the breakaway, all forms of distribution, narrowing the angle and improve reaction saves.

Typical 16U Training Session

- Approximately 90 minutes, but no more than 110 minutes.
- Warm up, Dynamic Stretching, Range of Motion Stretching, FIFA 11+ – 15 minutes
- Directional Games (play to targets or zones) – 30 minutes
- Small Sided games to goal with goal keepers – 35 Minutes
- Cool down & Static Stretching – 10 minutes

Drills/Games must be challenging, motivating, and include transition.

18U – Final Youth Phase – Training will continue to refine the technical and tactical skills previously learned while focusing on improving consistency and speed of play. Coaches must heavily emphasize composure and technical speed under pressure. Training should focus mainly on match related games and pit defense against offense. Players should be able to recognize tactics being employed by the opponent and be able to make good tactical decisions to gain advantages. Being able to transition and defend as a group in each third of the field should be a consistent training theme. Good team shape, defensive discipline, and attacking flexibility will be critical to the team success. Players should be taking a personal responsibility for their physical fitness training, and coaches should hold them accountable for that.

18U – Core 4 in order of priority

1. **Tactics:** Should be able to adapt tactics and change team formation during the flow of play. Team tactics, tactical functional training, specialized tactics for a particular opponent, midfield play, attacking out of the back third, possession with a purpose, combination play with tactical implications, penetration with creativity, intentional flank play, pressing to win possession as an attacking concept, consistency on set plays, playing a role, combination zone and man-to-man marking defense, creativity on the attack, total soccer concept and playing on, around and away from the ball with purpose.
For goalkeepers: support the attack from the defensive third, command beyond the penalty area, last line of defense—first line of attack and most of all, presence.
2. **Fitness:** Use the FIFA 11+ routine as a part of the warm-up. Be consistent with cool-downs, plyometrics, depth jumping, implementing the overload principal and fitness tests with and without the ball. Continue player education about nutrition and rest.
3. **Psychology:** Factors include increased concentration, reduced mental mistakes, playing with self-confidence and self-motivation, emotional management during a match, dedication, commitment, leadership, personal responsibility for actions on and off the field, sportsmanship, how to play, selfless – team comes first, discipline, composure, concentration, consistency, courage, personal goal setting, imagery, patience and respect for the game.
4. **Technique:** technical/tactical functional training, all techniques rehearsed at match speed and at match related and match condition levels.

Typical 18U Training Session

- No more than 120 minutes. May vary based on days until match day.
- Warm up, Dynamic Stretching, Range of Motion Stretching, FIFA 11+ – 20 minutes
- Directional Games (play to targets or zones) with emphasis on positional functional training – 30 minutes
- Small Sided games to goal with goal keepers – 35 Minutes
- Cool down, Static Stretching, and Leadership Training – 15 minutes

Drills/Games must be challenging, motivating, and include transition.

The parameters need to be shifting to keep players having to tactically adjust to the situation.

Section 3 – The Basic Principles of Play

Attacking Principles – The attacking team is the one in possession of the ball and the basic attacking principles should be implemented as soon as you have possession. Those attacking principles are: provide penetrations, provide support, unbalance the defense, switch the point of attack, improvise and finish.

- 1st Attacker (A1) provides penetration. This is the person on the ball that is either dribbling forward, passing forward, or shooting at the opponent's goal.
- 2nd Attacker (A2) provides support. The 2 to 3 players nearest to the 1st Attacker. They move into positions to give passing options to the 1st Attacker.
- 3rd Attacker (A3) provides width and depth. This includes everyone other than the 1st and 2nd Attackers. These players move into positions to be able to provide support to the 2nd Attacker if they receive the ball, but also get into positions to change the point of attack through a switch of the ball (width) or a ball played through (depth).

Defending Principles – The defending team is the one not in possession of the ball and the basic principles should be implemented as soon as possession is lost. Those defending principles are: pressure, delay, cover, balance, compactness, control and restraint.

- 1st Defender (D1) provides pressure and delays the advance of the ball. This is the person closest to the ball when possession is lost. They must quickly apply pressure and work to stop further advancement of the ball. Based on team defensive strategy these players channel the ball away from certain areas of the field.
- 2nd Defender (D2) provides cover. These players must position themselves to become the first defender if needed and disallow penetration from through balls.
- 3rd Defender (D3) provides balance. This includes everyone other than the 1st and 2nd Defenders. These players move into positions to be able to quickly defend if the point of attack is changed. These players will focus on closing down passing lanes, tracking off the ball runners, and giving warning to 1st and 2nd Defenders of situational changes they need to adjust for.

Transition – Transition is the most important moment in soccer and happens quite frequently in the youth game. Teams that develop a cohesive approach to dealing with this moment will be able to mount quick and effective counter attacks or shut down counter attacks before they have time to develop. The faster the recognition – decision – action process happens the more effective the player's performance will be. To effectively get players to recognize and adjust to transition moments requires coaches to do less coaching at games & more coaching on the topic in training. It also requires parents to refrain from making the decisions for them in matches. Talk with the parents about the importance of not coaching from the sideline to aid this skill development in the players.

Section 4 – Setting Goals

It is important that coaches and players have goals set for each season of competition, tournament, and off season. Goals set should have a record of it. Write them down so you can keep referencing back to them to evaluate progress towards reaching them. Work cooperatively to set these goals so everyone is on the same page. Make sure the goals are measurable and achievable through hard work and sound training. No goal is effective if it is too difficult or too easy to achieve. Be realistic when setting goals. Teams and individuals should have both short term and long-term goals.

Individual goals – Should be set with input from the coach and the individual player. They should be specific and in line with the overall team goals.

Team goals – Should be set by the team through collaborative discussion lead by the coach. They must be specific and measurable. They must fall in line with the overall objective of the team playing better soccer.

Short Term goals – These are goals that a player or team can achieve in a day, week, month.

Long Term Goals – These are goals that a player or team can achieve in a season or year. Most players cannot envision a multi-year plan so don't try to get that far out. Plus, the players that make up the team may be very different a couple years from now.

Section 5 – The Rhythm

Pitfalls that many coaches fall into is over or under training players. Coaches need to set an appropriate training and match schedule. Players need the appropriate time in between matches to rest and work on things to improve. As players age the rhythm of the training should change with their needs. Younger players shouldn't be asked to train with the same frequency and duration as an older player. That will just produce mental and physical burnout. The following chart shows the TRYSA recommended training frequency and match ratios based on the recommendations from USYS.

Age Group	Training Frequency	Training Duration	Training to Match Ratio
6U	1 day per week	45 minutes	1:1
8U	1 day per week	60 minutes	1:1
10U	2 days per week	60 minutes	2:1
12U	2 days per week	90 minutes	2:1
14U	2 days per week	90 minutes	2:1
16U	3 days per week	90 minutes	3:1
18U+	3 days per week	90 minutes	3:1

Tournaments have their purpose in the development of players but should not be a large portion of a player's development. Teams that are not ready to compete in that environment should not be signed up for one. TRYSA recommends that teams attend no more than two tournaments in a training season and that players have time to rest following a tournament. Playing several matches in a short amount of time can put a lot stress on a player's body. Make sure you check the level of competition, tournament rules, match durations, etc. prior to signing a team up for a tournament.

Section 6 – Training Cycles

Periodization is the process of dividing an overall training plan into specific time blocks, where each block has a goal. Each soccer year should be broken down into three levels of periodization. If done correctly, this will help your teams peak at the right time (tournaments, playoffs, etc.).

The **macrocycle** is the longest of the three cycles and includes all stages of a periodization training program. For a team that plays together for an entire year this can be broken down into the Fall season and the Spring Season. For a team that plays only one season it can be broken down into 1st half of the season and 2nd half of the season.

The **mesocycle** represents a specific block of training that is designed to accomplish a goal. Common mesocycles consist of 2 to 4-week training blocks. The mesocycles of each soccer macrocycle would be broken down into the four periods of Attacking, Defending, Transition from Attacking to Defending, and Transition from Defending to Attacking.

The **microcycle** is the shortest training cycle, typically lasting 1 to 2 weeks with the goal of facilitating a focused block of training.

The below diagram is an example of just one 4-week mesocycle of a 12U training macrocycle.

Mesocycle	4 Weeks Attacking			
Microcycles	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Technical Focus	Dribbling + 1 v 1	Passing & Receiving 2 v 1	Passing, Receiving & Turning with 2 touches 2 v 1, 2 v 2	Passing, Receiving & Turning with 2 touches 4 v 4
Tactical Focus	1st Attacker / Penetrate	2nd Attacker / Support	Combination Passing	Depth & Width Diamond Shape
Physical Focus	Speed & Agility	Awareness & Acceleration	Balance & Coordination	Cardio Endurance

The size of the macrocycle and number of mesocycles is going to vary depending on age of the players. An 8U player will probably only have 2 mesocycles (attacking & defending) per season, where an 18U player would have at least 4.

Section 7 – Coaching Resources

U6 – U12 Lesson Plans: www.ncsoccer.org/lessonstraining

NCYSA Coaching Education: www.ncsoccer.org/education

U.S. Soccer Digital Coaching Center: <https://dcc.ussoccer.com>

USYS Resource Center: www.usyouthsoccer.org/CoachResourceCenter

TRYSA Director of Coaching: coaching@tarriversoccer.org

Section 8 – Leadership Training

Leadership is probably the most important training we do as TRYSA coaches. Many of these are taught indirectly as players naturally progress through the curriculum, but as players get to the final stages of club soccer they should be taught more directly. There are 11 leadership principles and 14 leadership traits we want our players to learn, understand, and be able to apply to soccer and to life when they age out of our club. Nationally, only a small percentage of players will go on to play in college. Of those college players, only a very small percentage will play professionally. 100% of our players will be faced with needing leadership ability in life.

11 Leadership Principles

- **Know yourself & seek self-improvement** – Evaluate yourself, determine your strengths and weaknesses, and seek out ways to improve. To do this you must:
 - Make an honest evaluation of yourself
 - Seek the honest opinion of peers (teammates) and superiors (coaches)
 - Learn by studying the causes of successes and failures
 - Master the art of effective writing & speech
 - Have a defined plan to achieve your goals

- **Be technically & tactically proficient** - Know your job thoroughly and have a wide range of knowledge about it. “before you can lead, you must be able to do”.
 - Know what is expected of you, then spend time and effort to become proficient at it
 - Develop an attitude to learn more than what is required
 - Observe and study the actions of capable leaders
 - Spend time with those that are recognized as technically and tactically proficient in areas you need to improve in.
 - Prepare yourself for the job at the next level from where you are currently
 - Seek feedback from superiors (coaches), peers (teammates), and subordinates

- **Know your people and look out for their welfare** – A leader must make a conscious effort to observe their people and know how they will react to different situations. Knowing how they will react allows you to avoid putting them in unfavorable situations, and to know when additional supervision may be required.
 - Put the welfare of others before your own
 - Be approachable
 - Encourage individual development
 - Know your team’s attitude and keep in tune with their thoughts
 - Ensure equal distribution of rewards
 - Insist on participation with team activities

- **Keep your personnel informed** – Leaders should inform their people of what is happening and why it's happening. Give people enough information to perform their job intelligently and inspire their initiative, enthusiasm, loyalty, and convictions.
 - Whenever possible, explain why you are asking someone to do something
 - Stop rumors by replacing them with the truth
 - Build morale by publicizing successes
 - Keep people informed on any new things that will affect them (changes to rules, regulations, etc.)

- **Set the example** – A person must adhere to high personal standards themselves before they can demand it from others. Your image is on display daily and will be reflected in those you are leading.
 - Demonstrate that you are willing to do anything you are asking them to do
 - Maintain an optimistic outlook
 - Conduct yourself so that you do not open yourself up to criticism
 - Avoid showing favoritism among subordinates
 - Delegate authority and avoid over supervision to develop leadership in others
 - Teach leadership by being an effective leader

- **Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished** – Leaders must give clear, concise directions that cannot be misunderstood. Then supervise to make sure the task is accomplished.
 - Encourage people to ask questions about anything in the directions that is not understood.
 - Ask questions to ensure there is no misunderstanding.
 - Supervise with care to not over supervise and cause resentment, or under supervise and not get the job done.

- **Train your people as a team** – Teamwork is key to all successful operations. Insist on everyone working as a team and ensure that everyone knows their position and responsibilities within the team framework.
 - Stay sharp by continuously studying and training as a team
 - Do not publicly blame an individual for the team's failure, nor praise just one individual for the team's success.
 - Ensure training is meaningful and the purpose is clear to all members
 - Train your team based on realistic conditions
 - Insist that every person understands the functions of the other members of the team

- **Make sound and timely decisions** – Be able to rapidly estimate a situation and make sound decisions based on that estimation. Hesitation or reluctance by leadership leads to hesitation within the team and a loss of confidence in the leadership.
 - Develop a logical and orderly thought process by practicing estimating situations’
 - Plan for every possible event that can be reasonably foreseen
 - When time permits, consider the advice or suggestions of subordinates before making a decision
 - Consider how your decisions will affect all other members of your team

- **Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates** – By assigning tasks and delegating authority leaders promote confidence, initiative, and cooperation which will increase the desire for greater responsibility among subordinates. To develop this principle leaders should:
 - Provide clear and well thought out directions
 - Give frequent opportunities for others to perform duties normally by performed by you
 - Be quick to recognize accomplishments when others demonstrate initiative and resourcefulness
 - Correct errors in a way that will encourage the individual to try harder
 - Give advice and assistance freely when requested
 - Resist the urge to micro manage
 - Be prompt and fair in backing subordinates
 - Accept responsibility willingly and insist that subordinates live by the same standard

- **Seek responsibilities and take responsibility** – For professional development, you must actively seek out challenging assignments. Use initiative and sound judgment when trying to accomplish assignments. Seeking responsibility means you must take responsibility for your actions and decisions. Regardless of the actions of those you are leading, the responsibility for decisions and their application falls on you.
 - Learn the duties of your immediate senior, and be prepared to accept the responsibility of those duties.
 - Seek a variety of leadership positions that will give experience in different fields
 - Take every opportunity that offers increased responsibility
 - Perform every task, large or small, to the best of your ability
 - Stand up for what is right, and have courage in your convictions
 - Carefully evaluate failure before taking action against subordinates
 - In the absence of directions, take the initiative to perform the actions you believe your senior would direct you to perform if present

- **Employ people within their capabilities** – A leader must have a thorough knowledge of the tactical and technical capabilities of the group. Successful completion of a task depends on how well you know your group’s capabilities. If you ask your group to do something they are not trained to do, then failure is likely to occur. Seek out challenging tasks for your group but be sure they are prepared and have the ability to successfully complete the tasks.
 - Avoid volunteering your group for things they are beyond their capability
 - Be sure to assign tasks that are reasonable
 - Assign tasks equally
 - Use your group’s full capabilities before requesting assistance

14 Leadership Traits

- **Judgement** – The ability to weight facts and possible courses of action in order to make sound decisions. Sound judgment allows a leader to make appropriate decisions in the guidance, training, and employment of their group.
- **Justice** – Giving reward and punishment according to the merits of the case in question. The ability to administer a system of rewards and punishments impartially and consistently. Displaying fairness and impartiality is critical in order to gain the trust and respect of subordinates and maintains discipline and cohesion among the group.
- **Dependability** – The certainty of proper performance of duties. The quality that permits a senior to assign tasks to you with the understanding that it will be accomplished with minimum supervision.
- **Initiative** – Taking action in the absence of directions/being told to. Being a self-starter gives confidence to leadership that if a supervisor is absent, the plans will be carried out as scheduled.
- **Decisiveness** – The ability to make decisions promptly and communicate them clearly. Individuals must be able to collect the facts, weigh the facts and then choose and announce clearly the decision. It is often better to make prompt decisions than a potentially better decision at the expense of more time.
- **Tact** – The ability to deal with others in a manner that will maintain good relations and avoid offense regardless of one’s true feelings. Consistently treating others with respect and courtesy allows guidance and opinions to be expressed in a constructive and beneficial manner.

- **Integrity** – Uprightness of character and soundness of moral principles. The quality of truthfulness and honesty. Nothing less than complete honor to your word and honesty with others is acceptable.
- **Enthusiasm** – The display of sincere interest and exuberance in the performance of responsibilities. Displaying interest in a task and optimism that it can be successfully completed greatly enhances the likelihood that the task will be successfully completed.
- **Bearing** – Creating a favorable impression with your appearance and personal conduct. The ability to look, talk, and act like a leader whether it is true indication of one's feelings or not.
- **Unselfishness** – Avoidance of providing for one's own comfort and personal advancement at the expense of others. Looking out for the needs of others before your own is the essence of leadership but cannot be put ahead of accomplishing assigned tasks.
- **Courage** – A mental quality that recognizes fear of danger or criticism but enables someone to proceed in the face of it with calmness and firmness. Knowing and standing for what's right even in the face of popular disfavor.
- **Knowledge** – The range of one's information, including professional knowledge and the understanding of their group. Being knowledgeable makes someone versatile and of greater value to the accomplishment of assigned tasks.
- **Loyalty** – The quality of faithfulness to the group, leadership, subordinates, and peers.
- **Endurance** – Physical and mental stamina measured by the ability to withstand pain, fatigue, stress, and hardship. A leader that has high endurance can help motivate others to persevere through it as well.