



US Youth Soccer Total Player Development



**Edited by Dr. Thomas W. Turner on behalf of the
Region II Coaching Committee
Fall 2006**



Region II Coaching Committee

State Association

Illinois Youth Soccer Association
Indiana Youth Soccer Association
Iowa Soccer Association
Kansas State Youth Soccer Association
Kentucky Youth Soccer Association
Michigan State Youth Soccer Association
Minnesota Youth Soccer Association
Missouri Youth Soccer Association
Nebraska State Soccer Association
North Dakota Youth Soccer Association
Ohio Youth Soccer Association North
Ohio South Youth Soccer Association
South Dakota State Soccer Association
Wisconsin Soccer Association

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Associate Members

US Soccer National Staff Coaches

Mike Dickey
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The Purpose of this Manual

The purpose of this manual is to introduce the reader to the programs offered by US Youth Soccer; and to outline in detail the coaching philosophies of US Youth Soccer as practiced by the 14 Midwest State Directors of Coaching. The Directors of Coaching collectively form the Region II Coaching Committee.

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About US Youth Soccer



Welcome to US Youth Soccer The Game for All Kids!®

At US Youth Soccer we provide a fun, safe and healthy game for ALL KIDS...big kids, little kids, tall kids, short kids, young kids, older kids...kids who want to play for one season, kids who want to play for twenty seasons, kids who play strictly for fun, and kids who want to compete at the highest level possible. Kids are different, and because they are different their physical, social and psychological needs are different. We at US YOUTH SOCCER recognize this and our programs are aimed at meeting the different needs of ALL KIDS.

US Youth Soccer...The Game For ALL Kids!®

US Youth Soccer provides a healthy activity through its recreational and small sided games programs. These programs emphasize FUN, and de-emphasize winning at all costs. Every child is guaranteed playing time and the game is taught in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere.

For the player with advanced skills and greater ambition, highly competitive leagues are offered. This player might have his or her sights set on a college soccer scholarship or playing for the U. S. Olympic or National teams.

US Youth Soccer is the largest member of the United States Soccer Federation, the governing body for soccer in the United States. US Youth Soccer is a nationwide body of over 600,000 volunteers and administrators, and over 300,000 dedicated coaches, most of who also are volunteers. US Youth Soccer registers over 3,000,000 youth players between the ages of five and nineteen. US Youth Soccer is made up of 55 member State Associations; one in each state, and two in California, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas.

US Youth Soccer is a non-profit and educational organization whose mission is to foster the physical, mental and emotional growth and development of America's youth through the sport of soccer at all levels of age and competition. Our job is also to make it fun, and instill in young players a lifelong passion for the sport.

The US Youth Soccer membership is divided into four regions, each with a Director elected to the board. The regions are East (Region I), Midwest (Region II), South (Region III) and West (Region IV). Each State Association has a Board of Directors, elected by delegates from their member leagues, clubs or teams.

US Youth Soccer is a member of a much larger soccer community, and therefore its players are members of this world community. Here's how it works. Boys and girls register to play with one of the 6,000 + clubs or leagues formed by their State Association. Each of the 55 State Associations across America are members of US Youth

Soccer and US Soccer (there are two other divisions, US ADULT SOCCER for adults, and the professional division). US Soccer, along with over 197 other national soccer organizations, are members of FIFA, the Federation Internationale de Football Association. FIFA serves as the international governing body for soccer and US Soccer has been a member since 1913. Together, local, national and international organizations form a family of support for the young soccer players of America.

So come join the millions of kids having a ball. We've got a place for everyone in The Game for All Kids!® Call 1-800 4 SOCCER for more information on the programs offered by and benefits of belonging to US Youth Soccer.



Our History

1974 represents the beginning of a vision that has grown to establish the largest youth sports organization in the United States.

The insight of Karl Grosch, Don Greer and Robert Nessler would change the face of youth soccer - not to mention youth sports. It was the spring of '74; these men spent three days of non-stop labor to pen the initial United States Youth Soccer Association (US Youth Soccer) Constitution, By-Laws, Rules and Regulations by hand. Although it was considered revolutionary at the time, the goal was to unite the worlds of youth soccer in the United States through a democratic structure to provide uniform rules and guidelines.

After many drafts, with the help of State Associations, the documents were submitted to the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) for consideration. The 58th Annual USSF Council accepted and adopted the proposed documents at their 1974 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in New York City and thus officially formed and recognized US Youth Soccer as an affiliated, self-governing body for youth soccer in the United States.

The vision laid the groundwork for the various youth soccer organizations to join and bring the youth soccer community together and better the game, US Youth Soccer has grown into the largest youth sports organization in the United States. Starting with 100,000 registered players in 1974, today the organization has grown to 3.2 million registered players and over 800,000 coaches and volunteers.

From the first US Youth Soccer AGM, US Youth Soccer has developed programs and initiatives to set it apart from other soccer organizations and youth sport groups. With programs for underserved areas (US Youth Soccer's Soccer Start), athletes with physical disabilities (US Youth Soccer TOPSoccer - "The Outreach Program of Soccer"),

recreational players (Kohl's American Cup), competitive athletes (The US Youth Soccer National Championship Series), elite athletes (US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program) and youth soccer educators (Coaches Connection).

US Youth Soccer is the choice of America's youth soccer athlete, coach, referee and administrator. US Youth Soccer has established programs to recognize coaches (US Youth Soccer adidas Regional Coach of the Year and National Coach of the Year), youth referees (Young Referee of the Year), volunteers for TOPSoccer (Buddy of the Year), outstanding athletes (adidas All-Star Teams), and excellence on the field of play (adidas Golden Glove and adidas Golden Boot awards). US Youth Soccer has also created Youth Soccer Month, which is celebrated each September; and produced the US Youth Soccer Show, which is aired on the Fox Soccer Channel.

US Youth Soccer looks to build all ages and levels of The Game For ALL Kids!®



youthsoccermonth.org





National Championship Series

Sports don't build character. They reveal it.
Heywood Hale Broun, Sports Commentator and Writer

Striving for excellence motivates you; striving for perfection is demoralizing.
Harriet Braiker Psychologist, Author.

Don't measure yourself by what you have accomplished, but by what you should have accomplished with your ability. John Wooden, Basketball Coach



National Championship Series

Each summer US Youth Soccer crowns a boys and girls national champion in each of its seven age divisions (Under 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19). The finals are a culmination of a year-long series of competitions at the state and regional levels.

The US Youth Soccer National Championship Series provides approximately 129,000 players on 7,200 teams from US Youth Soccer's 55 State Associations the opportunity to showcase their soccer skills against the best competition in the nation, while emphasizing teamwork, discipline and fair play.



The US Youth Soccer National Championships serves as the crown jewel of competitive youth soccer as the nation's top 48 youth soccer teams, in the Under-14 through Under-19 Boys and Girls brackets, compete for the US Youth Soccer National Championship title.

A form of the US Youth Soccer National Championships were first held in 1935 and, after adding age groups throughout the years, reached the present format in 2001.

Age Group Competitions

Under-14 Girls:	Elmer Ehlers Cup
Under-14 Boys:	US Youth Soccer National Cup
Under-15 Girls:	Kristine Lilly Cup
Under-15 Boys:	adidas Cup
Under-16 Girls:	Patricia L. Masotto Cup
Under-16 Boys:	D.J. Niotis Cup
Under-17 Girls:	Laura Moynihan Cup
Under-17 Boys:	Don Greer Cup
Under-18 Girls:	Francis J. "Frank" Kelly Cup
Under-18 Boys:	Andy Stone Cup
Under-19 Girls:	Ross Stewart Cup
Under-19 Boys:	James P. McGuire Cup





Olympic Development Program

For an athlete to reach their potential there must always be higher standards to aspire to.
Tom Turner, Educator

You must have long-range plans to keep you from being frustrated by short-term failures.
Charles Noble, Engineer

Even when I went to the playground, I never picked the best players. I picked guys with less talent, but who were willing to work hard, who had the desire to be great.
Ervin "Magic" Johnson, Olympian



The US Youth Soccer ODP Goal

To identify players of the highest caliber on a continuing and consistent basis and contribute to the ongoing success of the U.S. National Teams in the international arena.



Purpose

The US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program was formed in 1977 to identify a pool of players in each age group from which a National Team will be selected for international competition; to provide high-level training to benefit and enhance the development of players at all levels; and, through the use of carefully selected and licensed coaches, develop a mechanism for the exchange of ideas and curriculum to improve all levels of coaching.

How do I participate?

Contact your local US Youth Soccer State Association office to find out more about getting involved with US Youth Soccer ODP. The Region II directory can be found at the back of this manual.

Program History

In 1979 the program expanded, the organization became more efficient, and multi-year plans were developed. State Associations were encouraged to develop programs which supported and worked in tandem with National and Regional programs. At the beginning of 1982 a formalized program for girls was created, with the addition of a full committee (one member from each Region).



Current Organization

From 1982 until the present, international events for youth national teams have increased substantially and the US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program has kept pace by instituting trials and player pools for five age groups in the boys' program, and five age groups in the girls' program.

The US Youth Soccer ODP Selection Process

Each State Association holds ODP try-outs on an annual basis. Age Groups and try-out dates may be different from state to state, based on seasonal and state considerations. Your first contact should be to your State Association for try-out information.

How are Players Selected?

Team selection always begins with an assessment of individual players. There are four criteria that generally form the basis for most evaluation schemes. These criteria are collapsed into the acronym “TIPS,” which was first developed by the KNVB in Holland and stands for....

Technique

Insight

Personality

Speed

The most critical quality for all soccer players is technique. This would include the player's overall range of techniques and the speed and ease with which they secure and use the ball. A player's balance and agility are closely related to technical range and at each successive level of play technique under pressure becomes the most obvious starting point for distinguishing between players.



Tactical insight is the second element in the equation. The talent evaluation of this area looks at how players solve small-group tactical problems and the degree to which they play in a structured team organization. At the younger ages, tactical insight is less important than technique and speed. However, as players mature into their mid and late- teens, they are often chosen for representative teams based on their superior qualities in a position, or because of their adaptability to other roles within the team.



The third quality is personality, and it is here that the players within a squad must be balanced to allow a team to be built from the complementary sum of its parts. Personality players are usually the first to catch a coach's eye and generally form the starting point for the team building process. In evaluating a group of players, it is readily apparent that they come with an assortment of qualities. Some have exceptional dribbling skills, while others have explosive speed; some have excellent passing range, while others dominate in the air; some are resolute defenders, while others impress by their ability to read the game and lead others; some very ordinary players are coachable and work hard and impress by their selflessness, while some very

talented players are lazy and frustrate through their unwillingness to work for themselves or the team; some players simply score goals, while others create chances for others through their set-up play; some gifted younger players are worthy of investing time and opportunity, even if they are physically overmatched; some players are so physically dominant that they are hard to ignore, even when their skills are a little rough around the

edges. In contrast, some players are so volatile and high risk, or so one-dimensional in their qualities, that their selection poses a very difficult decision; in these situations, only the exceptionally talented players are moved along within the system, but it is not uncommon for these very talented players to be excluded from international teams because their personality or playing qualities do not match the vision of the coach, or the “esprit de corps” (spirit and work ethic) within the existing squad.

Finally, the quality that often separates the good player from the exceptional player is speed. As a “relatively” genetic asset, physical speed from “A” to “B” is always part of an overall assessment. At the top levels, there are no slow players, although there are some international class players who are not considered “fast.” Speed can also include the time players take to assess match situations and take appropriate action (tactical speed) and the speed with which players control and use the ball (technical speed).



Team Selection

Choosing representative teams is, in large part, a question of balance and adaptability and it is not always the best eighteen attacking players who are chosen to fill the roster spots. Coaches must always endeavor to blend ball-winners with “skill” players in order to create a balanced team that can defend, and create scoring chances from both the center and the flanks.

Adaptability is also a key determinant in player selection. When a college, professional or national team coach needs a player to fill a role on the left side of midfield, for example, the top left-sided prospects are invited into the squad to compete for that specific role. With established professional and international teams, new players are usually selected for their ability to fill existing roles within an existing system. Ironically, the arrival of new players can also challenge the coach to consider ways in which the established playing formation and system can be changed to accommodate the qualities of the new players.

In contrast, when a representative team is selected at the youth level, identifying the best players is often the starting point for team selection and it is here that the versatility of players becomes more critical for the final analysis. At the club level, the best all-round players are usually found in central positions. At the ODP level, this glut of central players poses a dilemma for the selecting coaches. Assuming there is a rank-ordering of these central players, if the second tier players cannot play in flank positions, they are likely to be passed over in favor of naturally left-sided players and other natural wide players, even though these players may not possess the same overall range of qualities. A team cannot consist of eleven central midfield players.

Another critical factor at the youth level is “potential.” Because everyone matures at vastly differing rates during puberty, cohorts may be as much as a foot and 40 pounds

apart in height and weight. At the younger ages in particular, care must be taken to prioritize from the “TIPS” analysis. A 13-year-old with wonderful skills will likely be selected over a physically mature peer who has an immediate impact but limited technical upside. Conversely, the 16-year-old ball wizard who cannot out-run, out-think, or out-play the physically stronger opponent is unlikely to be given the benefit of the doubt at that stage. Such is the difficulty in youth team selection.



In summery, all team selections, in some way, reflect the bias of the head coach, except perhaps the choice of first-tier players who are always the easiest to select. It is with the middle and bottom tier selections that coaches earn their salt, and where personal bias in terms of style of play and overall team balance enter into the final decisions. In this forum, bias is not necessarily regarded as detrimental, but simply a fact of life. Coaches with experience make selections based on potential at the next level and potential over time, with the physical dimension often the last variable considered in the equation. Selecting the second and third tier players reflect educated guesses that one player has more of the tangible and intangible qualities to succeed than another. Without this perspective, the fine line in selecting one player over another can be lost on most observers. Sometimes the coach is wrong; more often than not, their experience bears out the selection.

What are Regional Trials?

US Youth Soccer is divided into four regions, each of which offers a regional trials for state association ODP teams in each eligible age group. The trials are designed to provide high-level competition and training for participating players. During this training and competition, players who are capable of performing at a higher level of play are identified for possible national team pool or team participation. Each region varies somewhat as to the specifics and the cost of their trials. Your state association or regional administrator should be contacted for more information. The Region II web site can be found at www.region2.com

What is a National Trial?

National Trials and Interregional events are held throughout the year at various locations in the United States. The National Team Coach or a National Staff Coach is present at these events to observe, train, and identify players for placement in the national pool or on a national team.

What are the Benefits of Participating in US Youth Soccer ODP?

"There are lots of opportunities for people to play soccer, but not many opportunities to develop soccer players." Alex Ferguson, Manager, Manchester United FC

1. Development as a player. The opportunity to train and play with the best player's in one's age group.
2. Top quality instruction from nationally licensed coaches.
3. Top quality competition. Games against other state association ODP teams.
4. Exposure to regional and national team coaches.
5. The opportunity to represent one's state, region, or country in competition.
6. Exposure to college coaches.





Midwest Regional League

It is a measure of our quality that more than 100 of the 160 teams that participated at the Regional Champonships in the U-14 through U-18 age groups also competed in the MRL during season 2005/06. In addition, all ten Regional Champions played in the MRL during the same period.

Paul Luchowski, Sports Consultant and MRL Commissioner.

Failure does not come from losing, but from not trying. The results of a contest are, to some degree, uncontrollable, and all the preparation in the world may fall short. To mentally and physically “lay it on the line” will always allow a greater chance for victory, and even if defeated, the loss offers no shame, but rather more insight for future attempts. Larry Brown, Basketball Coach.





Midwest Regional League

The mission of the MIDWEST REGIONAL LEAGUE (MRL) is to provide the highest standard of competitive play for youth teams in US Youth Soccer Region II (the Midwest Region) and to assure the continued growth and development of elite level players.

Very simply we are here for the **BEST TEAMS...the BEST PLAYERS...and the BEST COMPETITION.**

League Structure

The MRL features competition in five Age Groups (U14, U15, U16, U17, and U18) for both Boys and Girls. Two seasons are offered – Fall and Spring. Based on the number of teams in an Age Group, Premier and First Divisions are offered. Within the Premier and First Division, sub-divisions may also be formed. A promotion and relegation system has been adopted ensuring that success on the field results in teams participating at the highest levels of the MRL. Two teams from each age group and gender from Premier Divisions earn the opportunity to advance to the US Youth Soccer Midwest Regional Championships as wild card entries.



Relationship with Region II State Associations

The MRL is an extension of elite team competition for US Youth Soccer members from each Region II State Association. The top teams from State Associations qualify to participate in the regional league through their respective state cups and state leagues.



The MRL works with the appointed MRL State Association Representative from each state association in serving the teams entered in our league. State Associations are asked to lend support in field management/operations and in providing the highest quality of referees. State Associations also register players and team rosters for play in the MRL.

Teams

Teams earn the right to compete in the MRL based on play within their own State Association's competitions (thus receiving State Association approval); and must exhibit the level of play necessary to compete at the regional league

level (review and approval of teams by the MRL). Not all teams that apply are accepted into the MRL. Teams that participate in the MRL are expected to display the highest levels of conduct during competition. The MRL recognizes that teams also expect the highest levels of professionalism from all those associated with the League (other teams, coaches, referees). It is the MRL's goal to provide the absolute best high-level competitive environment for our teams through professional management and operations.

Governance/Management of League

The Regional Council has adopted the Midwest Regional League (MRL) Charter and has the authority to approve League Rules as presented by the MRL Commission. The MRL is managed and supervised by the MRL Commission. Members of the eight-person MRL Commission include: (a) the Commission Chairperson (the US Youth Soccer Region II Director); (b) three (3) Region II member State Association Directors of Coaching; (c) three (3) Trustees Representing Player Interests; and (d) the League Commissioner. The MRL Commissioner oversees the day-to-day operations of the League as its Chief Executive Officer.



FIFA Substitution Rules for Elite Players

The Midwest Regional League and the US Youth Soccer National Championship Series utilize a modification of the FIFA substitution rules to limit players from re-entering the game in each half of play. Why restrict substitution?

Players who are involved at the higher levels must learn to play soccer under FIFA rules. This includes playing with limited substitutions. The points which follow are included to explain the use of limited substitution for competitive games in the Midwest Regional League, the US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program, and the US Youth Soccer Nationals Championship Series.



First. The rhythm of soccer in America is universally fast and direct, but not controlled. With limited substitutions, players have to learn how to slow down and change the pace of their game from slow to fast and fast to slow, because it is impossible to run without resting for 80 to 90 minutes. When the game starts to slow down, there is always more constructive soccer played and that will lead to a more savvy soccer population.

Second. Neither players nor coaches really understand soccer "match-ups," because free substitutions (and usually mass substitutions) do not allow these important tactical situations to emerge over the course of a game. At the most competitive levels,

unlimited substitution is one of the primary obstacles to developing more insightful players.

Third. Soccer is supposed to be a players game, but free substitution allow coaches to constantly pull the strings and that has not proven to be particularly effective in producing "thinking" players. When there are limited substitutions, coaches have to think about their "moves" and live with them until the next break. This helps coaches better understand the game, too.

Fourth. Limiting substitution will force coaches to play their players for "blocks" of time. With 80 to 90-minute games, this will actually improve the players' enjoyment, while exposing those coaches who do not share playing time equitably.

Fifth. Subbing every few minutes disrupts the flow of the game and does not allow players to develop tactical solutions to their particular small-group situations. As a result, we have lots of runners who hustle, but very few skillful, creative soccer players.



Sixth. Players who aspire to higher levels of play must learn to play by international rules. FIFA-7 is the standard form of the substitution rule used in America for top-level competitions.



Seventh. There are always soccer players who are either lazy or cerebral, who need time to play their game without fear of being pulled off the field every few minutes and punished for not running. Oftentimes, these players are simultaneously the most frustrating and most gifted on a team. Some of the best goalscorers in history were not particularly mobile or energetic...until they had an opportunity to find a yard of space and nip in front of a defender to score.

Eighth. The Midwest Regional League has adopted the FIFA-7 substitution rules of the US Youth Soccer National Championship Series. The next logical progression is to implement this model within the respective state leagues and state cups, and thereby create a vertically consistent system for all elite levels of competition.

Ninth. Referees and assistant referees must also gain experience with the pace and rhythm of international soccer. By reducing the number of substitution opportunities, the match officials will become more attuned to the nuances of play and less concerned with the mundane management of player changes.

Tenth. There are many coaches who use unlimited substitution to callously disrupt the flow of an opponent's play or who use the stoppages in play to kill the clock towards the end of a game. With large rosters, balancing the line-up becomes the biggest challenge for the coach. For example, when does the strongest line-up play together? Does the strongest line-up start the game, finish the game, or play in the middle period? What is the best way to rotate the players? Does the system of play change when the personnel changes? When will the substitution be made in each half? How does the coach balance squad playing time, given the quality of the opposition and the importance of the game? Limited substitution forces the coach to make changes and live with them; it is not possible to negatively impact the game in ways that border on unethical misconduct.

Eleven. In youth sport, playing time is precious to both players and their parents. The evolution of club carding, where age-appropriate players can be moved between teams within a club, provides additional opportunities to reduce match roster size and increase meaningful and uninterrupted playing time.





Player Development

I don't believe skill was, or ever will be, the result of coaches. It is a result of a love affair between the child and the ball. Manfred Schellscheidt, US Youth National Team Coach.

There is nothing the coach can do in practice to offset what the player will not do alone. Anonymous

No two situations are the same in a game of soccer, and this is why players have to develop their technique by actually playing. There is no "ideal" technique; how a player kicks the ball with his instep will always depend on the options available to him, his position on the field, and the positions of his teammates and opponents. Bert van Lingen, KNVB Coach.

It helps if the coach continually encourages the players to make dribbling their first option. It may also help to make the players take at least two touches on the ball before they can look to pass. Remember that making mistakes at these early ages is an important part of the player's learning and development.

Encourage risk-taking and applaud effort.

US Soccer: Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States.



The Scope of Player Development

It takes 10 years of extensive training to excel in anything. Herbert Simon, Nobel laureate.

Player development encompasses technical, tactical, physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects of growth. By far, the most important aspect of the youth sport environment is emotional development. Participants must have fun and learn new skills and tactical insights in order to feel ownership in, and attachment to the game; and to develop the passion that will drive them to persevere and aspire to greater things.



"Despite children's limited skill, knowledge and understanding of tactics and strategies, many adults expect children to participate and act like professionals, when the children simply want to have fun and to be with their friends." Lynn Kidman, Educator

The Coaching Challenge

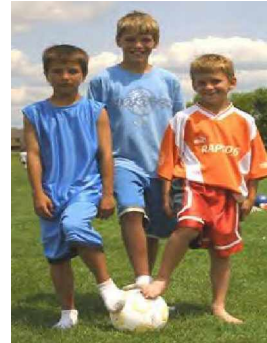
It is estimated that approximately 70% of children quit sports by age 13. The Youth Sports Institute cited the following reasons for kids playing and quitting sports in a 1987 study. Subsequent follow-up studies have continued to validate these findings.



The 10 most important reasons I play my best sport.

In order of importance....

1. To have fun (Related to coaching)
2. To improve my skills (Related to coaching)
3. To stay in shape (Related to coaching)
4. To do something I'm good at (Related to Coaching)
5. For the excitement of competition (Related to coaching)
6. To get exercise (Related to coaching)
7. To play as part of a team (Related to coaching)
8. For the challenge of competition (Related to coaching)
9. To learn new skills (Related to coaching)
10. To win (Related to coaching)



The 11 most important reasons I stopped playing a sport.

In order of importance....

1. I lost interest. (Players don't develop ownership in the sport)
2. I was not having fun. (Adults are too critical of mistakes and self-expression)
3. It took too much time. (It takes approximately 10 years, or 10,000-hours to be proficient at anything)
4. Coach was a poor teacher. (Not being taught basic skills)
5. Too much pressure (Not understood by their coaches or parents / Pressure to perform)
6. Wanted a non-sport activity. (Some drop-out is inevitable)
7. I was tired of it. (Too much, too soon, perhaps?)
8. Needed more time for study.
9. Coach played favorites.
10. The sport was boring.
11. There was an overemphasis on winning.



Core Problems with Youth Sport Development

Dr. Istvan Balyi is a leading expert in the field of long-term athletic development (LTAD). Here are some of his key observations of youth sport.

- The chronological age, rather than the biological age, of players dominates competition and training decisions.
- Young athletes under-train and over-compete.
- Adult competition is likely to be superimposed on young athletes.
- Male programmes are likely to be superimposed on females.
- Training in the early years is heavily focused on outcomes (winning) rather than processes (overall child development).
- The best coaches are frequently encouraged to work at the elite levels.
- Under-development between 6 and 16 cannot be fully overcome; athletes will never reach their genetic potential.
- Coach/teacher education tends to skim the growth, development and maturation of young people in favour of technical information.

In general, young soccer players require a certain amount of uninterrupted play. This allows them to experience soccer first-hand. They should be allowed the opportunity to experiment, and with that succeed and fail.
US Soccer: Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States.



National Youth Games Program

On Friday, October 21, 2001 the Region II Directors of Coaching endorsed the following structure for youth soccer. This model is now standard in Region II and practiced in over 80% of the 55 state associations which constitute US Youth Soccer.

- ❖ U-6: 3v3
- ❖ U-8: 4v4
- ❖ U-9/10: 6v6
- ❖ U-11/12: 8v8
- ❖ U-13 and older: 11v11

Why Young Players Should Play Kid-Sized Games....

Training and playing in soccer games with numbers that match the developmental abilities of the players derive the following benefits.

- ✓ Players repeatedly experience similar tactical situations
- ✓ Players are more likely to be actively engaged in the sport
- ✓ There is more freedom from stifling positional constraints and players have more opportunities to experience different positions
- ✓ Players are regularly involved in attack and defense
- ✓ Players have more frequent transitions between attack and defense



- ✓ Proportionally smaller fields are more suited to the technical limitations of young players
- ✓ There is more emphasis placed on skills and understanding than fitness
- ✓ More goals are scored and goal scoring is highly motivating
- ✓ More players have the chance to score a goal
- ✓ There is more emphasis placed on individual and group possession
- ✓ There are more opportunities to be technically and tactically successful
- ✓ The game is easier to coach at all levels
- ✓ Individual player personalities have a chance to emerge



Too often, we give children answers to remember rather than problems to solve. Roger Lewin, Humorist, Author

Empirical Support for Small-Sided Games

Study #1

The following data were collected in a 2002-2003 study conducted for Manchester United Football Club by Dr. Rick Fenoglio, a lecturer in Exercise Science at Manchester Metropolitan University. Fifteen 4v4 and 8v8 games were videotaped and analyzed for the study. The players observed were primarily U-9 boys.



Passes:	+135% or 585 more passes in 4v4 games
Shots Taken:	+260% or 481 more shots in 4v4 games
Goals Scored:	+500% or 301 more goals in 4v4 games
1v1's:	+225% or 525 more 1v1's in 4v4 games
Tricks, Turns, Moves:	+280% or 436 more tricks, turns, and moves

Study #2

The following conclusions were reported in 2001 by John Weinerth as part of a 4v4 vs 8v8 pilot study for the California Youth Soccer Association - South (CYSA-S). The players observed were U-8 girls.



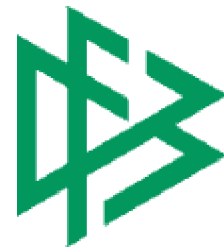
1. In the 4x4 game on a smaller field (35x25 yards), most of the players (88%) touched the ball 3-4 times more in several different categories such as: goals, shots on goal, completed and lost passes and total passes while still maintaining similar completion ratio of 31 vs 35%

2. When no positions were given to the players (the player's were free to move around the field), the results were that they were much more involved & subsequently touched the ball 3-4 times more.
3. In the 8x8 game (80x50yard field), two or three players dominated the game in passes and dribbles.
4. The observation of the game by several people was that the 4x4 game flowed with little breaks compared to the 8x8 game which had many breaks due to restarts from goals, shots on goals, throw-ins and dribbles by 2-3 dominating players.
5. Based on the oral survey, 88% of the players answered the oral survey questions #2 and #3 (Which game did you have more fun playing (on the small field or the bigger field)? & Which game allowed you to touch the ball more 8v8 or 4v4?) in favor of the 4v4 small-sided game.

The individual Player Performance Analysis clearly illustrates a much more active involved player in the 4v4 game in comparison with that same player that seemed hidden and uninvolved in the 8v8 game.

Study #3

This study was conducted by the German Football Association, in conjunction with The Sports University of Cologne. The players observed were 6-10 year olds.



Observations on the question, “What Game Format and Development Model is Best?” were as follows.

1. Children like to compete with each other
2. Skills need to be developed in playful environment
3. Players can't learn when game demands skills or tactics they haven't yet learned
4. If they encounter the same situation many times over, they learn to deal with it
5. Complicated rules, such as offside detract from the ability to learn fundamentals
6. Commonly accepted now that ages 8 to 12 are ideal for developing technique and coordination
7. In spite of this many coaches continue to implement adult rules and strategies, which hinder this development
8. It's not enough to merely substitute smaller games for 11v11
9. Basic concepts such as passing, control, dribbling and ball possession must be taught
10. Players should not be forced into rigid positional responsibilities until they have mastered the basics
11. Development is a long term process, and the player's enjoyment should take precedence over that of the parents - games that teach soccer fundamentals may not be the most exciting to watch
12. By changing conditions and variations of the training games, the coach can alter the playing style of the children

The study concluded the following...

1. 4v4 and 5v5 (with goalkeeper) Training and Tournament Games are a must for technical and basic tactical development
2. 7v7 in a 35x55 or 40x60 yard field provides the ideal game for players who have already acquired enough technical development to allow them to cope with more testing tactical decisions
3. 4v4 must be used regularly in training and tournaments
4. 7v7 in half field and 11v11 are totally inappropriate for players under 12 years of age as they encourage Kick and Chase Soccer
5. Kick and Chase games do not develop the building blocks - close control, passing, dribbling and ball possession

One reason small-sided games are so good is because they force players to defend and attack. Very much of what my father did in practice replicated the street soccer he grew up with in the streets of Argentina. And street soccer usually meant small-sided games. In a small space, players have to make quick decisions on the ball and be able to handle it under pressure, because an opponent is usually close by. And you can't hide in small-sided soccer. If you're not marking opponents when they have the ball, they'll capitalize quickly. When your teammate has the ball, you need to make yourself available or he'll be cornered quickly. Claudio Reyna, US World Cup Captain.

The Evolution of the Competitive Soccer Environment

The following information offers recommendations on the appropriate ages for competition in youth and adult soccer.

A word of caution...

What are generally good and reasonable recommendations for young players are often tempered by the negative attitudes and behaviors of the adults surrounding the game. For players in the U9 through U-12 age groups, in particular, the naturally healthy response to competition is being questioned at the highest levels in light of the win-at-all costs attitude displayed by many coaches.

This pressure is amplified at the pay-to-play levels, where results influence revenues. In addition, the subtle and not-so-subtle emotional pressure to perform exerted by parents has brought, and continues to bring, the wisdom of the following recommendations into question: all too often, it seems, adults are forgetting the true value and purpose of youth sport.

U-6 Local soccer-related activities including 3v3 games

Rationale: Entry-level soccer programs should focus on broad motor skills, general sports skills, and informal soccer games.



U-8 Local 4v4 matches in Play Day format

Rationale: Second and third year players are too young for formal league play and structured teams. Group training and competition provides for motor skill development, soccer training, and non-threatening competition in small numbers.

Children who have not reached Piaget's third stage of cognitive development (concrete-operational-ages 7 to 8) are unable to think about more than one thing at a time. Joy Butler and Barbara McCahan, Educators.

U-9 Start of 6v6 non-competitive play

Rationale: Eight year-olds, typically with three to four years of sports experience behind them, are approaching the cognitive age where formal team play becomes relevant and necessary.

However, the introduction to competitive play is often marred by the attitude of parents and coaches who do not understand long-term athletic development and who are misguided in their demands and expectations. It is therefore strongly recommended that U-9 play be non-competitive and that no standings are kept or championship awards presented.



As children enter the age group of 9-11 years, they begin to see the difference between ability and effort. By the age of 11, a perceived failure has a more significant impact on sporting self-confidence, because these children are likely to attribute it to a lack of ability. Based on this outcome of perceived lack of ability and the high drop out rates that may result, it may be concluded that adult-structured competition and organized sport are not necessarily beneficial for children. Lynn Kidman, Educator

U-9 is generally the age where communities and teams begin the dangerous process of try-outs. It is strongly recommended that no cuts are made at this time and that all players in an age band are trained together with the same coaches. Further, with the evolution of the club pass system, it is strongly recommended that players be freely moved between teams as ability, availability, and enthusiasm dictate. This "Academy" development approach (outlined on pages 38-43) is recommended for players between the ages of 8 and 12.

U-10 Start of formal 6v6 competitions, including league play and tournaments

Rationale: The start of the period known as the First Golden Era for player development is an opportune time to begin formal competition. In general, players are starting to spread out and play within a team; in



general, players are capable of training and playing with some degree of purpose; in general, players are psychologically capable of learning from formal competitive situations. While the parent and coach issues remain a concern, the overriding factor in promoting formal competition at this age is the need of the players.

During their spring season, U-10 players should be introduced to the 8v8 playing format in training games and friendly matches.

My father's coaching philosophy was, "Learn to play first, learn to win later." Besides making sure that we were always having fun, his main emphasis was on passing. My dad didn't make a big deal about scoring. He wanted us to pass the ball as much as possible. To keep possession. If he saw us 9-and 10-year-olds exchange five passes without losing the ball to another team, he was pleased, even if it didn't result in a goal. Then as we progressed, he wanted to see us string 10 passes together.
Claudio Reyna, US World Cup Captain.

U-12 Start of 8v8 competition and formal ODP opportunities.

Rationale: By age ten, the concept of playing in a midfield line becomes cognitively more plausible. While many coaches will continue to play direct soccer with little regard to positional play, those with the skills to develop three-line soccer will find willing minds. The key developmental focus should still address technical development and 8v8 games provide a reasonable balance between technical repetition and tactical complexity.

During their spring season, U-12 players should be introduced to the 11v11 playing format in training games and friendly matches.

The most dramatic change from the U-10 age group is the player's increased ability to stay focused and to begin taking responsibility for their decisions on the field. At the same time, this is still an eleven- or twelve-year old. As far as positions are concerned, players should learn the game based on the principles of the game rather than positions on the field. Player's decisions on the field should be based on what makes sense to them. If children are placed into the straightjacket of positional play too early, it will only destroy their instincts to be involved in the game. US Soccer: Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States.



U-13 Start of Regional Cup competition

Rationale: By the early teenage years, the typical club team has competed in local and out-of-state tournaments and played in state cups. The inclusion of U-13's in the regional cup competition has been a positive step.

Too many matches and too much soccer desensitizes players to the special quality of the match and the concept of "match day." US Soccer: Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States.

U-14 Start of Regional League and National Championship competition

Rationale: The regional league places significant funding demands on family resources and time demands on club coaches. The club coaches are strongly in support of starting the regional league at U-14.

U-16 Start of Adult Opportunities

Rationale: Perhaps the most overlooked and underestimated feature of player development is the opportunity to train with, and compete with and against adults. Competent individuals and teams should start to experience the adult environment at this time.



U-19 Start of Adult Competition

Rationale: With most players heading off to college after their senior year of high school, the inclusion of a U-19 division in youth tournaments has proven to be problematic. It is recommended that the U-19 events come under the auspices of the adult division.



A Model of Player Development

One of the leading experts in athletic development is the Canadian, Dr. Istvan Balyi. His 2002 model of Long-Term Athletic Development (LTAD) is presented here, and expanded in the sections below.

The “Learning to Train” and “Training to Train” stages are the most important phases of athletic preparation. During these stages we make or break an athlete! Istvan Balyi, Sports Scientist.



What Can be Learned at the Various Ages?

Tables 1-3 below (Turner, 2006) provide a framework for training guidelines and learning expectations through the various ages. It is estimated that becoming a competent performer takes 10 years, or about 10,000 hours of training, suggesting that one of the keys to long-term player development is to effectively match training activities with the critical skills and abilities for the age group.

What the coach purposely and deliberately teaches is seldom immediately grasped by the players.
Tom Turner, Educator

The information is intended to be reflective of normal group development and does not discount the potential progress of exceptionally talented individuals.

Table 1.

	U-6	U-8	U-10	U-12	U-16	U-18
Field Players						
Body Awareness	Yes	Yes	Transition	No	No	No
ABC's: Agility, Balance, Coordination	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Speed Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Basic Motor Skills	Yes	Yes	Transition	No	No	No
Basic Sports Skills	Yes	Yes	Transition	No	No	No
Ball Manipulation Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elementary Tactics	Yes	Yes	Transition	No	No	No
Elementary Game Rules	Yes	Yes	Transition	No	No	No
Formal Game Rules	No	Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Development of Spatial Awareness	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Development of Positional Awareness	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes
% Training to % Competition Ratio	100 : 0	100 : 0	70 : 30	70 : 30	60 : 40	50 : 50
Formal Warm-up	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mastery of Basic Motor Skills	No	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes
Introduction of Basic Soccer Skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Transition	No
Introduction of Advanced Soccer Skills	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Basic Game Rules	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Small Group Tactical Problems	No	No	Yes	Yes	Transition	No
Individual Speed of Play	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Group Speed of Play	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Team Speed of Play	No	No	No	No	Transition	Yes
General Fitness	No	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes
Soccer Specific Fitness	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Expanded Tactical Insight	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Aerobic and Strength Development	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Functional Training	No	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes
Functional Fitness	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Game Tactics	No	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes
Use of Free weights	No	No	No	No	Transition	Yes
Individual Psychology Training	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Team Psychology Training	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Psychology of Teambuilding	No	No	No	No	Transition	Yes
Specific High Intensity Individual Fitness	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Recovery and Regeneration	No	No	No	No	Transition	Yes

Table 1 provides a broad developmental mapping of soccer concepts relative to the typical stages of growth and maturity.

Goalkeeper Development

Goalkeepers also demonstrate developmental markers that help focus coaching.

Table 2.

	U-6	U-8	U-10	U-12	U-16	U-18
Goalkeepers						
Basic Catching Skills	All	All	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Basic Footwork	No	All	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Crossing Situations	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
GK Specific Fitness	No	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes
Angles	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Starting Positions	No	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes
As a supporting player	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Communication	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Organization	No	No	No	No	Transition	Yes
GK Specific Fitness	No	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes
Game Tactics	No	No	No	No	Transition	Yes
Collapsing	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Power Diving	No	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes

Table 2 provides a broad developmental mapping of goalkeeping concepts relative to the typical stages of growth and maturity.

The Phases of Play by Age

All invasion sports, including soccer, have naturally occurring moments that are referred to as the “phases” of play. The following table offers guidelines on when the formal teaching of the phases of play should begin.

Table 3.

	U-6	U-8	U-10	U-12	U-16	U-18
The Natural Evolution of Phases of Play						
Attacking the Goal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Defending the Goal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Counter-attacking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Defending Against the Counter-attack	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Building up / Circulating the ball in the Defensive Half	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Building up / Circulating the ball in the Attacking Half	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Attacking Restarts	No	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes
Defensive Restarts	No	No	No	Transition	Yes	Yes

Table 3 provides a developmental mapping of the phases of play relative to the typical stages of growth and maturity.

A Model of Player Development: The Big Themes

At the younger ages (6 to about 10) soccer is not a team sport. On the contrary, it is time for children to develop their individual relationship with the ball. The fact that younger children are placed into team environments is not their fault. Do not demand that the more confident players share the ball. Encourage them to be creative and go to goal. Do the same with the rest of the players. Work to bring all your players up to that level of confidence and comfort with the ball.

US Soccer: Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States.

The following model is intended as a descriptive continuum. It is presented to provide perspective on the skills, abilities and emotional needs of young children as they mature. While the information is generally accurate for each age group, all children mature at different rates based on their genetic timetable and the influence of adults, siblings and friends. It is also true that two children of the same chronological age can be 1 to 3 years apart in terms of biological and social development. While significant overlap between stages is quite normal, some precocious youngsters will understand the game and perform its skills at levels far beyond their cohorts, while the abilities of some older children will more closely resemble that of younger players. The following developmental outline should therefore be taken as an illustrative continuum, rather than a definitive description.

U-6 Coaching Theme: Individual Play

The critical, FUNdamental phase is often overlooked by coaches, teachers and parents, who focus on competition and winning rather than the acquisition of basic skills and fitness. Istvan Baly, Sports Scientist

Five and six year-olds have very limited coordination and body awareness and are just learning to appreciate the difficulties associated with manipulating an object as troublesome as a round soccer ball without using their hands. They can dribble in straight lines. They can turn the ball in wide arcs. They can kick with the laces and the toes and they can stop the ball if it is not traveling too fast or coming out of the air. They will pass to teammates if they have time to assess their location and how to coordinate the kick, and they will gladly try to recover the ball when out of possession. They have no practical concept of space or teamwork and they have very little tolerance for complicated rules. While they are very egocentric, they will share the ball with teammates and, in spite of their limited attention spans and absent pacing skills, players as young as five and six will play small-sided soccer games for up to an hour, if they are provided with, or allowed to take, periodic breaks.

At the U-6 level, the primary concern of the adults is to facilitate activities that cater to frequent ball contacts and the development of basic motor skills. One player-one ball activities and various “fun games” are excellent complements to small-sided soccer games of up to 3v3. While U-6’s can play 4v4, 3v3 provides for a less cluttered environment. The formation of teams is not recommended, with group activity “Play Days” (see page 30) replacing formal, structured play. All activities should include every player.



Goalkeepers should not be a feature of play at this age. However, using the hands to manipulate the ball during individual and partner activities designed to improve body-to-ball awareness should be encouraged.

Primary U-6 Practice Elements

- Free Play with Small Numbers and Adult Helpers (street soccer environments)
- Ball / Body Awareness Activities
- Activities to Develop Agility, Balance and Coordination
- Fun / Fantasy Games
- Individual Ball Manipulation Activities

U-8 Coaching Themes: Individual Play and a Little Passing

*Kids need to explore the game on their own terms. The game is the best teacher.
Manfred Schellscheid, US Youth National Team Coach.*

Under 8's are still very fragile young people and still very egocentric, but their coordination, balance and agility are developing rapidly and a growing technical range allows some players to be quite sophisticated in their individual play. Seven and eight year-olds are "beginning" to consider the concept of teammates, making planned passing more of a realistic tactical option. They can only kick the ball accurately over a short distance and they still do not like to deal with balls coming out of the air. They can dribble away from pressure and they are beginning to understand that the game can have a rhythm other than "frenetic." Their range of techniques can include a number of different kicking surfaces and textures, but their vision for the game is almost exclusively post-control (after possession is secured). Their limited appreciation for space does not marry well with numbers above four. They will move to open areas to



receive passes when given time to assess how to help their teammates and they are capable of playing and practicing with restrictions and more complicated rules. They do not understand offside.

At the U-8 level, dribbling the ball is still the primary soccer focus, although passing can be expected and should be encouraged. Encouraging the players to take a "soft" controlling touch to set up a dribble, pass or shot is a critical element for the developing soccer player. The children will be much more aware of how to play soccer games and should be given more responsibility

for making teams and rules and for keeping score. Games of up to 4v4 with no goalkeepers are excellent small-sided versions of soccer for these children and no formal teams should be created at this time.

“Play Days” are recommended in lieu of formal league competitions and activities should be designed to include every player. Small-sided soccer games should be the primary content of practice, with “fun games” designed to maximize ball contacts used in complement.

All seven and eight year-olds should be trained as field players, not goalkeepers.



Primary U-8 Practice Elements

- Free Play with Small Numbers and Adult Helpers, where necessary (street soccer environments)
- Ball / Body Awareness Activities
- Activities to Develop Agility, Balance and Coordination
- Small-Sided Soccer Ladders
- Fun Games
- Cooperative / Competitive Activities in Pairs
- Individual Ball Manipulation Activities
- Small-Sided Games with Various Scoring Options

U-10 Coaching Themes: Technique, Individual Speed of Play, Support Around the Ball, and Small-Group Tactics.

The key ingredient to encouraging high self-esteem is to ensure children have personal success, as when they feel that they have accomplished something their confidence increases. All children need to have success so they feel able to try new things and have fun with what they are doing. Inappropriate criticism can be a critical impediment to this learning. If they are constantly criticized for mistakes, children decide that learning is a dreaded thing. A child's low self-esteem comes from learning to expect failure when he or she does something. Lynn Kidman, Educator.

Under 10's can be unabashedly creative in their play. The best young players at this age move well with the game, circulate the ball quickly between teammates, defend with power and aggression, and generally play soccer in a way that can be exciting to watch. For the best U-10's, the vision to determine “what next” starts before the ball arrives (pre-control) and their ability to apply sound technique in subtle ways, such as chipping and 1v1 dribbling, are becoming evident. Under 10's are developing a working understanding of width, making some measure of positional play much more realistic



to their level of understanding; however, they generally do not create depth very readily and the inclusion of a “midfield” in any playing organization creates insurmountable crowding problems for all but the most advanced players. Under 10’s can understand the value of technical repetition and are much more willing to practice independently. They will head the ball and are more likely to try to control balls coming out of the air. Their passing range can be upwards of 30-40-yards. Under 10’s can pass and control the ball with any surface and are capable of disguising their passing and dribbling movements. Feinting and faking are common features of play for the more gifted technicians.

At this stage, young players start to identify themselves with a “team” and will be much more motivated to attend to formal instruction and repetitive practice activities. Improving and refining individual play through technical repetition is an important goal of this period and small-group tactical awareness can be rapidly expanded. Granting children the freedom to creatively produce individual solutions to tactical and technical problems is a critical element of coaching. Particularly at this age, it is vital to encourage players to take purposeful controlling touches rather than encouraging them to simply kick the ball away. Players will begin to move away from each other, but creating space and playing with back to goal is a difficult combination of skills that can be fostered in more advanced players. Improved vision and support are the tactical markers of this age, and improved ball circulation is achieved as players understand about controlling and changing the rhythm of play. The better players in this age group will begin to combine with each other and goalkeepers should be frequently rotated. Games of up to 6v6 provide a natural balance between technical repetition and tactical complexity.

By the time a young player approaches nine or ten, their physical qualities will have changed significantly and they will have clearly started to identify with the trappings and mindset of the goalkeeper position. While these



players should remain as active field players for at least two-thirds of all team-oriented training sessions and half of games, they should certainly be helped to refine their goalkeeping techniques before or after the regular practice, or during goalkeeper-specific sessions. Goalkeepers at this age can perform all the basic catching techniques and can collapse in control and dive with some power. The basic tactical concepts of getting into the line of shots and closing down shooting angles are also within the capabilities of the U-10 player. The major coaching emphases during this period should be refining basic techniques, improving footwork and balance, and building hand-eye coordination as a response to the speed, height, and trajectory of the ball. While dealing with high balls should be part of training, crossing situations, per se, rank low in terms of relevance to game situations.

Primary U-10 Practice Elements

- Free Play in Small Numbers (street soccer environments)
- Small-Sided Soccer Ladders

- Individual Technical Development
- Technical Games
- Possession Games
- Play in Match Form
- 4v4 Games with Various Scoring Options
- Fun Games

U-12 Coaching Themes: Individual Play, Individual and Small-Group Speed of Play, and the Principles of Play.

The challenge for our society is to find ways to meet this tremendous variety of needs, and also to meet society's desperate need to promote greater physical fitness. Our society is good at looking after the needs of the talented few in sports. It has failed badly in meeting the needs of the "untalented" many. Shane Murphy, Sport Psychologist

The competent U-12 player is comfortable in possession and can demonstrate a number of skillful solutions to evading pressure. The better players will juggle and perform "tricks" with the ball for fun, and to impress their peers, and in games; and their maturing body control and coordination provides the agility to quickly change speed and direction with the ball. The competent U-12 can kick the ball with a wide range of techniques, with bending the ball seemingly the last skill to emerge. Shots and passes can be struck with power and accuracy and passing range is expanding beyond 40 yards. Crossing and heading are a much more common feature of play. Given appropriate playing spaces, U-12's can control and change the rhythm of play in large groups, and attack and defend with a high level of sophistication. U-12's are generally prepubescent, but some size and weight differences related to growth are evident. The level of competitiveness and the drive to win can be impressive, with a maturing physical dimension providing for longer periods of play.

At this stage, motivated and talented players are capable of demonstrating almost every technique, but practices should still include significant periods of technical repetition and small-sided play to reinforce and refine this technical base. The competitive structure should involve playing numbers through 8v8 and, for the first time, players can intellectually appreciate the basic ideas of positioning and roles; meaning games involving possession in midfield will be possible. The early lessons of support and mobility can be expanded to evolve combinations in two's and three's, and defending can also become more coordinated as players learn to relate to each other in both attack and defense. Individual and group decision-making can be associated with purposeful changes in the rhythm of play and movement away from the ball can become a critical element of problem solving. The careful introduction of activities designed to develop soccer-specific fitness find a foundation in this period. The very best players in this age group are capable of playing 11v11; the vast majority is not.

Under 12's goalkeepers are capable of looking, acting and performing in mature ways, with only physical limitations and game experience constraining their rate of progress. The coaching emphases should continue to refine basic techniques for catching, collecting, smothering and diving, with crossing situations becoming much more

relevant. Tactically, Under 12's eleven and twelve year-olds have much greater range in performing their supporting functions behind the defense and in dealing with crosses, and their willingness to communicate with defenders should be encouraged. The U-12 goalkeeper will likely have difficulty with crosses and high balls played into the area, particularly in traffic, and their appreciation of how to organize a defense in crossing situations will prove to be a challenge. The need to circulate the ball across the back of the team to change the point of attack brings the goalkeeper's foot skills into prominence, as does the enforcement of the pass back rule.

As with field players, the skills and abilities of U-12 goalkeepers will be highly varied. Specialist trainers are recommended for this group to ensure that a sound balance is maintained between skill refinement and fitness. A major concern with the layman goalkeeper coach is that anaerobic fitness activities are often coated as goalkeeper "development," and that high intensity training activities are often lauded as meeting the long-term needs of this population. While some fitness enhancement is expected from regular goalkeeper training, skill refinement is more likely to be achieved from lower intensity activities.

While technical and physical development will remain staples of the young goalkeeper's practice diet, a key emphasis in training goalkeepers at the U-12 level is the expansion of tactical awareness, particularly with the offside rule becoming a challenging new feature of play. The goalkeeping basics of getting into line and cutting down the shooting angle also require constant refinement and reinforcement, especially as field players become more adept at disguising their shots and striking the ball with increased pace and spin. Facing live practice situations in small-sided and large-sided games is important for young goalkeepers as they learn to relate their choice of technique to the tactical demands of the game.

Primary U-12 Practice Elements

- Free Play in Small Numbers (street soccer environments)
- Small-sided Soccer Ladders
- Individual Technical Development
- Technical Games
- Possession Games
- Play in Match Form
- 4v4 Games with Various Scoring Options
- Fun Games



The First “Golden Age” For Soccer Development: Academy Level (U-9/12) Development Principles.

“Academy” programs have emerged as a 21st century alternative to the frustrating shortfalls in soccer development displayed by most young pre-teens. This void is heavily influenced by the pressures to win at critical periods in the development process. In an effort to improve individual player development, satisfaction and retention, and to build a

less pressured youth soccer environment for coaches, adult spectators, and match officials, the Region II Director's of Coaching advocate the following Best Practices as the guiding principles for U-9/12 player development.

Youth Player Development Philosophy

Above all else, young players should be helped towards technical independence and the creative application of technique in small group activities. Secondly, when the ball is lost, players should be encouraged to get it back!

Rationale: Team development follows individual development, not the reverse. Therefore, a long-term player development philosophy is based on individual and collective (group) possession and the ability to play with controlled changes of rhythm. Transition to defending should be learned as a natural response to loss of possession.

When designing curriculum, constructivist teachers organize information around conceptual clusters of problems, questions, and discrepant situations because students are most engaged when problems and ideas are presented holistically rather than in separate, isolated parts. Much of traditional education breaks wholes into parts and then focuses separately on each part. But many students are unable to build concepts and skills from parts to wholes. These students often stop trying to see the wholes before all the parts are presented to them and focus on the small, memorizable aspects of broad units without ever creating the big picture. Jacqueline and Martin Brooks, Educators

Playing Formats

U-10: 6v6, with a suggested maximum game roster of 8.

U-12: 8v8, with a suggested maximum game roster of 10.

Rationale: These playing formats have been nationally adopted by US Youth Soccer and smaller game rosters increase playing time.

This (game playing) does not mean we should let children play the elite form of the game, but rather we should design games children can play. By doing so, we allow them to develop skillfulness and confidence in their ability to be successful game players. Judy Olsin, Educator.

Two-Year Age-Grouping

Academy players should consider training and competing in 2-year age groupings.

Rationale: Two-year age groupings provide for more flexibility in playing and training opportunities and create an environment where younger players learn from older club-mates before assuming the leadership roles.

Universal Club Pass

Players should be registered to an organization, rather than a specific team.

Rationale: Club carding provides a simple mechanism for an organization's Technical Director to move players vertically and horizontally between age-appropriate teams, as required. These decisions are made on the basis of player ability, availability, and

motivation and ensures that different learning experiences are available to deserving players.

Lowering Competitive Pressures and Costs

Academy level teams should be grouped together in local leagues/divisions with approximately twice as many teams as games played in a season.

Rationale: This helps to reduce the amount of travel time and limits the creation of unofficial standings since teams do not play enough common opponents. For the U-9/10 age groups in particular, minimizing travel time and expense can help to provide hesitant families with a more tolerable introduction to the next levels of soccer; and young children with more spare time to enjoy their weekends.

Building in Bases of 40

With an eye towards fielding a “minimum” of two teams at the U-13 age group, organizations should look to build their bases in blocks of 40 U-9 players. As can be seen in the table below, a base of 40 U-9 players provides for a minimum of four 6v6 teams at U-9, a minimum of three 8v8 teams at U-11/12, and then two 11v11 teams during the early teen years. Organizations with larger numbers in the U-6/8 ages should field additional teams as numbers dictate.

Suggested “Base-40” Club Structure		
U-19	Competitive Level A	“A” Team in Adult League / “B” Team in Youth League
U-15/17	Competitive Level B	Two separate A/B teams of up to 18 players
U-13/14	Competitive Level C	TRAINING POOLS of up to 36 players divided into A/B teams for games
U-11/12	Academy Level A	TRAINING POOLS of up to 40 players divided into A/B/C teams for games; or BALANCED for games, with more a homogeneous ability range.
U-9/10	Academy Level B	TRAINING POOLS of up to 40 players divided into four BALANCED teams for games
U-6 and U-8	FUNDamental Levels I and II	TRAINING PODS of up to 36 players per field with RANDOMLY FORMED TEAMS and no formal games

Balanced vs Tiered Teams

Where possible, teams and training groups should accommodate each player’s ability level.

Rationale: The overall training objective for U9/12’s is long-term individual development, but not all players develop at the same rate. All players in the U-9/10 age groups should train together where logistically possible, with ability and motivation considered as selection factors for tiering as the players approach U-12. For games, the club pass system provides for fluid player movement between teams, as necessary; and talented young players should play and train at the level their talent merits.

Technical Director

When an organization has multiple teams, many benefits can accrue from having a single recognized technical expert in charge of the entire soccer operation. An elected Board should be responsible for the financial health and stability of the organization.

Age Group Coaching Staff

Ideally, having competent and qualified assistant coaches with soccer playing backgrounds to assist the Technical Director provides the best overall coaching situation. These coaches would be responsible for overseeing specific age groups. However, this scenario is not always practical or financially feasible for local communities or smaller organizations.

More likely, most individual teams will have a licensed parent coach chosen by, and under the supervision of the Technical Director. In the absence of more qualified coaches, the team parent coach would implement the Technical Director's practice plans and coach games. Parents should not coach their own children.

Age Group Practices

When an organization has multiple teams in an age group, joint practices should be held for the entire age group and supervised by the Technical Director or Age Group Coach. This approach is club and age group centric rather than team centric, and serves to diffuse individual team identities for the long-term health of the wider age group. Group training also serves to maintain a focus on individual and small-group development over team building.

Training Frequency

Training for Academy level players should be offered four times per week.

Rationale: It is estimated to take about 10,000 hours of training and competition to reach a high level of proficiency in any sport. In soccer, this process will take a minimum of ten years. Talented and motivated young players must be given the opportunity to train more frequently under good coaches and with other talented and motivated players. Therefore, outside of regular training sessions, a minimum of two optional practice opportunities should be provided per week.

Player Recruitment

An organization's Technical Director and staff should observe and communicate with their recreation level teams, where they exist, to encourage all young players to enter the Academy program.

Why training is more important for young players than game playing.

- ❑ During a major international tournament (11-a-side) with FIFA-3 substitution rules (three changes with no re-entry), the individual time of possession for 90-minute games ranged between 20 seconds and three minutes, with an average of one and a half to two minutes possession time per player. (Bangsbo and Pietersen, 2004)
- ❑ In a study of 1500 ODP level female players, the average number of games reported played over the previous twelve months was 116. With an average game duration of 80-minutes and a maximum roster of 18, and with the ball out of play for an average of 33%, the typical player would experience 1.5 minutes of active play per game for a total of 174 minutes per year. Less than 3 hours of ball contacts! (Turner, 2003)

Under FIFA-3 substitution rules, a young soccer player competing in 100 games per year will only come into contact with the ball for a maximum of 300 minutes, or 5 hours. The recommended ratio of training sessions to games for 9-12 year-old players is 70% training and 30% games.

Rationale: Each organization has to be pro-active in maximizing their player resources. Many young players quit, or are removed from soccer by their parents, because they are cut at U-9 and perceive themselves as not good enough. Personal contacts with coaches and players and ongoing education programs for parents are required to create and maintain a soccer culture.

Trainers and Assessors

The organization's Technical Director and/or age group head coach should be responsible for selecting and training assessors.

Coaching Licenses

All coaches and active assistants should hold the appropriate youth module for the age(s) they are coaching.

Rationale: Coaching education is closely related to the speed and quality of player development.

No Selecting Out

Every player who attends a youth try-out and demonstrates a willingness to work and learn should be provided the opportunity to compete and train with his or her cohorts.

Rationale: The best players selected at U-9 are often very different from the best players identified at U-13; who, in turn, are not guaranteed to become college players or seasoned professionals. Delaying the selecting-out process until U-13 broadens the player pool and helps to safeguard the late bloomers.

Evaluation Components

Small-sided games, rather than objective drills, should be used to assess players and provide periodic feedback.

Rationale: Assessors must observe each player's technical speed, tactical insight, and overall soccer speed under realistic game-like conditions. Soccer "skill" is the application of technique; oftentimes skillful players are not highly technical.

Players should be evaluated on:

- Technical Speed: The ability to settle a ball and dribble, pass, or shoot.
- Tactical Speed: The ability to read the game and make decisions.
- Soccer Speed: The ability to run and change direction in response to the game.
- Personality: The individual qualities a player brings to the game.



Parent Education

Parents must become more fully aware of their influence on player retention and development. Academy programs utilize the following methods to minimize parent pressure on young players.

- Mandatory and on-going education programs.
- Mandatory signing of a pre-season Parent's Code of Conduct.
- Practice "Silent Soccer" at practices and matches.

U-14 Coaching Themes: Individual Technique, Speed of Play, Group Tactics, and the Principles of Play.

"The most important thing is that to be a good player you need to train and have the opportunity to practice." Tord Grip, former England Asst. Coach

The most talented and dedicated soccer players will have developed a full range of technical skills by the dawning of the teen years. Unfortunately, adolescence can often play havoc with agility, coordination and balance and these skills may regress for a period of time until nature's time for rapid maturation has passed. These physical changes can also take an emotional toll as young, and often, insecure teenagers struggle to overcome the frustration of diminished performance and perhaps social status. Throughout the teen years, a primary function of the coach is to stabilize the range of techniques and develop permanent mind-muscle habits. Both isolated technical repetition and technical repetition under pressure are critical for this development and also for improvements in overall speed of play.



For those players targeted for the elite levels, technical and tactical functional (positional) training take on a more prominent training role during the mid to late teen years. The physical changes that mark adults from adolescents will create wide ranges in the size

and weight of players during the teen years. Girls will generally complete their growth spurts earlier than boys, although both sexes can experience periods of delayed growth as late as the early 20's. Physical and psychological training, incorporating a wide range of performance factors, are essential components of a well-balanced training environment.

Young teenagers are not polished soccer players, and the expansion and refinement of their technical base must still be the primary focus of these important years. Coaching 11v11 team play will begin at U-13, and patience will be required as the players' physical and tactical dimensions adapt to the larger field size and increased numbers. Practice activities should be geared towards improving decision-making under pressure, while challenging players to solve small and large group problems quickly and collectively. As defenders become stronger, faster and more aggressive, attacking players will require sharper instincts for creating and using space, particularly, when playing with their backs to goal. Soccer-specific fitness activities should become integrated into an overall training and development plan, with caution advised with regard to over-training and burnout.



Primary U-14 Practice Elements

- Individual and Group Warm-up
- Possession Games
- Technical Functional Development
- Tactical Functional Development
- Individual Technical Development / Technical Games
- Soccer Fitness

U-15 through Adulthood: Team Building, Functional Training and Learning to Win.

This is truly the beginning of the formal “team building” years. As players begin to reach physical and technical maturity, training should seek to develop the skills specific to positional (functional) play and fitness becomes important as a means of achieving victory. Players' strategic understanding of soccer must be expanded to help make them coach-independent. Appreciation of the various systems of play, the study of individual and team tendencies, and the tactical applications of the laws become important aspects of player development.



Primary U-15/Adulthood Practice Elements

- Individual and Group Warm-up
- Possession Games
- Technical Functional Development

- Tactical Functional Development
- Match Management Activities
- Individual Technical Development / Technical Games
- Physical Development



Please Mum and Dad, by Anonymous

Give me the time and opportunity both on and off the field to make my own decisions
 I need to learn about getting it right and wrong
 Try not to tell me off for doing things wrong from the sideline
 Give me the chance to relax and play; I need the mistakes to help me learn
 Try not to give me advice going to games or coming home.
 Let me reflect; it helps me learn
 Remember I am a young person, not a small adult
 Sometimes I don't see things as you do or understand what you are saying
 Come and enjoy the game; I will always try my best
 Listen to me if I come to you with a problem
 Sometimes I need someone to talk to; it helps me learn
 Please love me for who I am not what I can do
 It's not about me, it's about us; let's learn together





Coaching Development

Delight, first and foremost, is a memorable experience. Its subjective qualities are such that it stands out from the ordinary. We do not encounter delight all that often, but when we do, it tends to stick in our memory. Fun, by way of contrast, is more common and ordinary. Events that are merely fun usually recede into the background over time. Days or even hours after the pleasurable occasion, we cannot remember the details. Thus, although episodes that include fun are pursued and enjoyed, they are also quickly forgotten.

Scott Kretchmar, Educator

We want to produce players who are independent-where they don't worry if they look up and the coach is not there. It shouldn't make any difference. We want them to make the decision.... Our view is that if you set the right environment at training, then on the weekend, apart from the team talk before the game and at half-time, they look after themselves. Richard Light, Educator.

Coaches are encouraged to promote soccer that is free flowing, is coach-guided but no coach-directed, and demands that all players in the field, regardless of their specific position, participate in defending and attacking. US Soccer: Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States.



The Practice Session: Does It Look Like Soccer?

Why a Games Approach to Coaching?

The Region II Coaching Committee advocates the playing of modified soccer games in practice as the key to developing more skillful players. When versions of small-sided games are used as teaching tools, players must learn to apply their techniques in fluid tactical contexts. This approach serves to develop instinctive game awareness and foster creativity by capturing the essential ingredients of street soccer.



The performance of skills is deeply tied into the contexts within which they are performed. What works in neat lines at training typically breaks down under game conditions. Games are not neat, well ordered, and predictable. Players must perform within, and adapt to, a constantly changing, fluid environment. Spaces constantly appear and disappear, and players must keep track of the movements of opposition players and teammates within a context of changing conditions. Games are chaotic in so many ways. To replicate game conditions, Game Sense training often appears chaotic. Players standing in lines performing drills are learning something and that learning is often explicit, but are they learning to play the game? Richard Light, Physical Educator.

The Underpinnings of a Good Practice Session

Good Coaches Strive to...

- Understand the player's age and ability levels and plan practice activities accordingly.
- Provide for meaningful participation by eliminating lines and including every player in every activity.
- Develop technique in tactical contexts by playing small-sided games and the using relevant conditions to shape learning.
- Follow the 75/25 Rule by keeping drill-like activities to a maximum of 25% of the practice time.
- Balance success and challenge in the activities, by arranging for even-ability teams and making sure the field sizes and any conditions make sense to the skill level of the players.
- Provide for natural tactical transitions from attack to defense and defense to attack.
- Provide for natural and connected transitions between activities.
- Use competition as a motivational tool. What do the players have to do to win and how long is the game?



- Understand the value of limited feedback during natural stoppages.
- Understand the value of extended periods of uninterrupted play.
- Understand the value of excitement and positive reinforcement.
- Balance the volume of coaching information against the natural facilitation of discovery learning.
- Effectively match field space to the ability of the players.
- Vary the range of activities, while maintaining a focus on the key developmental aspects for the age.
- Study the players' body language for understanding and enjoyment.
- Study the players' body language to determine when to move an activity along.
- Show your enthusiasm when something good happens; temper your frustrations when the inevitable mistakes are made.
- Appreciate the slow pace of learning.
- Appreciate that mistakes are necessary and important for learning.



From Coach-Centered to Player-Centered Coaching

The traditional teaching model in the United States places the onus for generating knowledge and information on the shoulders of the coach. For novice coaching in particular, this expectation can be quite overwhelming. In this traditional model, the coach is responsible for game strategies and technical analysis and practice drills and team discipline and all other aspects of individual and team development. In short, the coach is regarded as the fountain of all knowledge, while the player's role is to simply listen and follow directions. Sadly, the model fails to address the most important aspect of learning – the motivation of the learner!



In the street soccer cultures there are no coaches. Players learn by repetition and by imitation and by observation and by experimentation. Passion is derived from ownership in the process of organizing and managing games. It should be no surprise that the Brazilians and the Argentineans and the Mexicans and the Portuguese and the Spanish are still regarded as the most talented players in world soccer. These countries still possess a thriving free play culture. In parallel, almost half of Major League Baseball

players now come from free play cultures, such as Venezuela and the Dominican Republic.

As a complement to the Games Approach advocated in this manual, players can be helped to better understand soccer, and to take more ownership, by being more active in their individual development and the overall teambuilding process. By assigning responsibility to players; by asking them questions about possible technical and tactical solutions; by asking them for their observations and input; by asking them to collectively solve their own problems; and by making the coach a part of the learning environment, rather than the focus, players become more integral to their own learning.

First, teachers and coaches should design game play situations that foreground decision-making. Second, teachers and coaches should use questions to gain insight and information from students about what they are processing or not processing. French and McPherson. Educators.



Teaching for Delight!

Scott Kretchmar's notion of "Teaching for Delight" is based on an appreciation that when we have truly enjoyed something, there is delight taken from the experience that stays with us and motivates us to come back for more. In coaching soccer, the goal is to create an environment that excites and motivates and inspires players to persevere. This will never happen while soccer training remains programmed in a sterile, detached package that players relate to only peripherally. For the players become more motivated, they must be allowed to assume ownership and control over their environment.

The Coaches Toolbox

The Anglo-German model of identifying and correcting mistakes has historically dominated physical education teaching and sport coaching in the United States. This model comprised of three parts: Stop (**freeze**) play after a mistake; **Explain** the correct technique or decision to the player(s); and then **Restart** the activity or game with a successful picture.

Unfortunately, we see many coaches and players destroying self-confidence by always looking for faults and being too negative. Too much energy is spent correcting faults instead of reinforcing what is good. Coaches become "no-fixated" instead of "yes-encouraging. Willi Railo, Sport Psychologist.

In order to capture the essential ingredient of free play, which is prolonged periods of uninterrupted play, and to increase player-enjoyment and learning, US Soccer has begun to move coaching education towards the Games Approach. This paradigm shift requires new approaches to instruction and a change of mindset on the part of the coach.



The “Coaches Toolbox” provides a range of less-intrusive methods that allow instruction to remain part of the soccer-training environment, but not the focus of it. The toolkit includes the following five approaches...

- ❖ Coach the Individual in the Flow
- ❖ Coach the Group in the Flow
- ❖ Coach during Natural Stoppages
- ❖ Use Conditions to promote learning
- ❖ Use Freezes when necessary

Fundamental to the successful use of the toolkit is the balance between player enjoyment, primarily achieved through periods of uninterrupted play, and the volume and delivery mode of coaching information.

Rather than adhering to current soccer programs that concentrate on the execution of different skills, the modern coach should teach pupils to understand all aspects of the game. Too much drill will kill the young players' innate potential! Over time, coaches should carefully and progressively develop important capacities, including perception, analysis of game situations, and correct decision-making under stressful conditions. Yet a coach cannot foster these qualities through verbal instruction alone. When coaches continually use verbal instruction, they become the main actors in the coaching theater, thereby curtailing or even killing the active participation of the players.

Usurping the active role is detrimental to the players' effective learning. By involving the players, on the other hand, a coach obliges them to think, to collect information, to organize the collected information and come to conclusions, to evaluate and judge, to imagine, invent, and create new moves and combinations.

Horst Wein, Soccer Coach.

Minimum Licensing Recommendations

The needs of young children are very different from the needs of young teenagers who, in turn, have different needs from young adults. The evolution of state and national coaching programs now reflect these significant differences and provide coaches of all playing backgrounds and experiences with a common framework for raising the quality of the youth soccer environment. The Region II Coaching Committee recommends the following license structure.

USSF / USYS U-6/8 Module

For adults facilitating in the 3v3 and 4v4 formats



USSF / USYS U-9/12 Module / E License / NSCAA Regional Diploma
For coaches working with 9-12 year-olds competing in 6v6 and 8v8 formats

USSF / USYS D License / NSCAA Advanced Regional Diploma
For coaches working with 13 year-olds and older competing in 11-a-side soccer.

USSF / USYS National Youth License
For age group coaches working with players aged 5-12
For club Directors of Coaching
For youth club, league and state administrators

USSF / USYS C License / NSCAA National Diploma
For coaches aspiring to ODP level coaching
For coaches aspiring to become college coaches
For coaches aspiring to become state level instructors
For club coaches working with teenagers
For high school coaches



USSF / USYS B License / NSCAA Advanced National Diploma
For assistant club Directors of Coaching
For assistant college coaches
For state level ODP coaches
For state level instructors
For high school coaches working with advanced players



USSF / USYS A License / NSCAA Premier Diploma
For club Directors of Coaching
For head college coaches
For state level ODP coaches
For state level instructors
For high school coaches working with advanced players

USSF / NSCAA Goalkeeper Level I and II
For club Directors of Coaching
For coaches working with goalkeepers

It is impossible to formulate exact written instructions on how to help players to improve their game. A coach must be competent at reading (i.e. analyzing) the range of different situations which crop up in the game. Good soccer coaching demands an enormous amount of insight on the part of the coach, as well as the ability to interpret correctly the shortcomings and/or talents of his (or her) players and to involve the players in the search for solutions to the problems encountered. Bert van Lingen, KNVB Coach

Coaching Ethics and the Developmental Process

Ethics are the standards of conduct and moral behavior specific to an organization. Coaches affiliated with US Youth Soccer (USYS) fall under the umbrella of the United States Soccer Federation (USSF). The following statements refer to the ethical standards expected from USYS coaches involved in educating young children in soccer and seeking to understand the reasons for children's participation in and growth through youth sport.

1. Ethics with regard to coaching for “Process” versus “Product”: Coaches who place the outcome of games ahead of the ongoing needs of the participants are being unethical.

The primary reasons children play sports are to participate and learn new skills, to be with friends, to compete with and against others, and to have fun. They enjoy learning from new experiences and, as time goes on, from direct instruction. They do not like being scolded or abused for making mistakes and they would rather play in a losing effort than sit on the bench during a victory. They would also rather play in a close game than in a blowout. Very young children rationalize winning and losing to working hard; older children equate winning and losing with their skills and abilities, directly influencing their self-confidence. Care must be taken to allow players between the ages of five and twelve the opportunity to become skillful and game savvy by focusing on their long-term development rather than their win-loss record.



2. Ethics with regard to Soccer Rules: Coaches who bait, antagonize, or otherwise challenge the decisions of the officials are being unethical.

It is the responsibility of the coach to understand the basic rules of play and to strive to educate his or her players to perform within the letter and spirit of the rules to the best of their abilities. Both novice and expert coaches, and especially those coaches who are also registered officials should appreciate that the application of the rules to the game is based on the interpretation of the officials. It is the coach's responsibility to model good sportsmanship and to demonstrate respect for the game. It is also the responsibility of the coaches to monitor and control any form of referee abuse by players, parents and other spectators.

3. Ethics with regard to Playing Time: Coaches who play only their better players in an attempt to win games, and those who do not provide young players with equal playing time, or adequate rest, are being unethical.

Youth sport is not a miniature version of adult sport and all young players have a right to equal playing time, regardless of the status or level of a contest. Players who do not regularly participate are at higher risk of dropping out, and no youth coach can predict which talented or round or awkward young player will become the star of tomorrow once maturation, talent and desire are coupled with a good training environment.



It is also regarded as unethical to over-play children in an attempt to bolster the chances of a club winning multiple games played on the same day, or over a number of days, as is often the case at tournaments. Players who are fatigued face a higher risk of injury, and players who play an excessive number of games over a prolonged period or months or years are at higher risk for burning out and developing overuse injuries. It is also true that players who face excessive playing demands are often hurried back from injury, with serious potential for chronic joint instability as a result.

4. Ethics with regard to Positioning: Coaches who restrict the movement of players in small-sided games in order to win games are being unethical. Coaches who rigidly organize players into formal positions to artificially separate them are guilty of over-coaching.

The ability of players to understand positions starts to emerge around age ten and develops rapidly over the next few years. Small-sided games that do not require a formal midfield organization are designed to provide age-appropriate and ability appropriate competition for players under the age of eleven. The intent is for players to enjoy freedom of movement within the game, thereby learning how to create and use space within small-group environments. Small-sided games can also help coaches better appreciate their “curriculum” in working with young children.



In addition, two key elements of team play at U-11 and above are support for the midfield and forward lines from the defenders, and the natural movement of defenders into midfield and forward positions to create numerical superiority around the ball. The practice of positioning “Goalie Guards” close to the penalty area and restricting these players from moving with the team is clearly intended to limit the loss of goals. Finally, the practice of positioning attacking players in front of the opponent’s goal to “Cherry Pick” does not help the team quickly transition to attack, nor does it help develop the important skills of playing with back to goal. Neither of these practices is in the best interests of the players.

5. Ethics with regard to Blowouts: Coaches who deliberately run up scores are being unethical.



Lopsided games in youth sports are inevitable and care must be taken to appreciate the sensitivity of young children to such events. Playing short-handed, adding players to the opponent's team, playing key players out of position, sitting key players for longer periods, playing with limited touches, restricting scoring from close range, and only scoring from crosses are some possible options for dealing with blow-out situations. At the youngest ages, adult coaches should consider playing in goal to help the losing team gain some measure of stability or consolation.

6. Ethics with regard to Player Advancement: The coach who seeks to retain a player(s) who has outgrown the knowledge and abilities of the coach for the implicit or explicit purpose of winning games is being unethical.

Players improve by playing with and against other good players, through personal motivation and independent practice, through study, through observation, and through good coaching. By far, the most important factors in player development are coaching and environment. At the top level, the successful coach is one who develops players to their fullest potential and reaps the rewards through the play of the team. The successful youth coach, in contrast, helps individual players develop to their fullest potential, or to the limits of the coach's knowledge, before moving them along to a higher level of play and a new learning environment. The unethical youth coach often seeks to covet his or her top performers for reasons of self-worth and personal gain, regardless of the short and long-term impact on the individual player.



7. Ethics with regard to Game Tactics: Coaches who use negative tactics and minimize the enjoyment of the players in order to win games are being unethical.

Winning youth soccer games is relatively easy. The coach who tells his or her players to take no risks with back passes; kick every ball forward; dribble the ball forward; stay behind the ball, or behind the half when playing as a defender; press the opposition into their half at every opportunity; and be very aggressive when defending, will win a higher percentage of their games. Youth coaches who play to win at all costs in this manner are guilty of practicing an insidious form of child abuse. The younger the players are when a coach displays this attitude, the less likely it is that they will ever experience the joy of actually playing soccer as it can be: An exercise in creative self-expression. It is quite easy to be "winning" youth soccer coach; it is much more difficult to be a "successful" youth soccer coach.

8. Ethics with regard to achieving Success by Recruiting: Coaches who routinely recruit players from other organizations as a shortcut to developing from within are being unethical.

The practice of recruiting good players to build a victorious youth organization often undermines the efforts of those coaches who understand the value and perils of building for long-term development. Yes, winning is enjoyable, but successful coaching is better defined as winning with an eye towards a competent end product. Player development takes at least ten years, and embraces success and failure as necessary elements of the process. Perpetual victory is not in the players' best interests; nor is club-hopping in search of meaningless trophies and awards. Players need to be challenged to persevere and aspire; and to learn the value of loyalty to good coaches, even when the organization is not always successful. The ethics of coaches who cut and recruit players in order to win must be scrutinized. Victorious youth soccer organizations are not always reflective of coaching competence.



9. Ethics with regard to Respecting the Game

Soccer has been played worldwide in one form or another for over 4500 years, and in the United States since 1869. Over four million American children now play youth soccer. The first official soccer rules were codified in London, England in 1863 and the World Cup is the world's largest single sport event. It is the responsibility of each coach to demonstrate respect for the game by honoring players, spectators and officials, and by promoting positive character development to all young players in words and deeds. Coaches who fail to meet these standards by displaying poor sportsmanship and overreacting to the natural ups and downs of the game are being unethical.



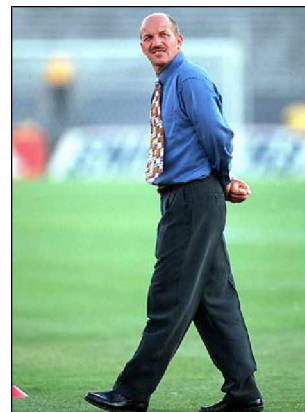
NSCAA Code of Ethics

The National Soccer Coaches Association America (NSCAA) Board of Directors endorses the following Code of Ethics and Conduct. It serves as a model for all coaches working to forward the game in the United States.

1. Soccer is the players' game. The paramount concern of coaches is the holistic development, welfare, enjoyment and safety of their players.
2. Coaches bear responsibility for teaching their players to strive for success while playing fairly, observing the Laws of the Game and the highest levels of sportsmanship.
3. Coaches shall treat officials with respect and dignity, and shall teach their players to do the same.
4. Our opponents are worthy of being treated with respect. Coaches will model such respect for opponents and expect their players to do likewise.
5. In both victory and defeat, the behavior of a coach shall model grace, dignity and composure.
6. Coaches shall adhere to the highest standards and the regulations of the institutions they represent: clubs, schools, sponsoring organizations and sports governing bodies.
7. Coaches have a responsibility to promote the interests of soccer, including treating media with courtesy, honesty and respect.
8. Coaches shall model inclusive behavior, actively supporting cultural diversity while opposing all types of discrimination, including, but not limited to, racism and sexism, at all levels of soccer.
9. Coaches are responsible for taking an active role in education about, and prevention and treatment of, drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse, both in their own lives and in the lives of their players.
10. Coaches shall refrain from all manner of personal abuse and harassment of others, whether verbal, physical, emotional or sexual, and shall oppose such abuse and harassment at all levels of soccer.
11. Coaches shall respect the declared affiliations of all players, and shall adhere to all guidelines and regulations on recruiting established by the governing bodies having oversight of their teams and leagues.
12. Coaches shall seek to honor those who uphold the highest standards and principles of soccer and shall use appropriate protocol to oppose and eliminate all behavior that brings disrepute to the sport - violence, abuse, dishonesty, disrespect and violations of the Laws of the Game and rules governing competition.

**Glenn “Mooch” Myernick
(1955-2006)**

The Personification of Class





Risk Management

The first duty to children is to make them happy. If you have not made them so, you have wronged them. No other good they may get can make up for that. Charles Buxton, Author.



Risk Management

Purpose

The purpose of the Risk Management program is to provide a safe and healthful environment to the players participating in US Youth Soccer sanctioned leagues, programs and tournaments.



Background

As awareness increases about the risks associated with individuals working with children who abuse their authority by committing sexual, physical, mental and emotional abuse, there is a need to provide a means of protection. In August 1994, US Youth Soccer approved the KidSafe Program and placed it into effect immediately. As a part of this program, US Youth Soccer charged each state organization with the responsibility of developing a written program outlining safety guidelines and procedures.

Player/Adult Protection Guidelines

Definitions

Adults are defined as those persons in their roles as coach, assistant coach, board member, team manager or volunteer who works with, for or around **players**. This would include anyone older than the age group they are interacting with; for example, a 15-year old assistant coach of a U-11 team would be considered an **adult** for the purposes of Risk Management guidelines.



Player defines all persons who are members of, or play on a soccer team. This definition does include those players who participate at the u-19 level, even though they may be of legal age. In the example of the 15-year old assistant coach: if s/he is also a rostered participant on a U-16 or higher team, that person is also subject to the Risk Management guidelines applicable to a **player**.

Guidelines

These guidelines recognize that the lines of authority and separation between adults and players must be recognized and respected. Generally, players are children and as such, deserve special protection. These guidelines provide that protection while setting levels of acceptable conduct for adults.

I. Physical contact

- ❖ **Adults** must be aware that any physical contact with **players** can be misinterpreted. Physical contact should be limited to that necessary and appropriate to teach a skill, treat an injury, or console or congratulate a player. In the instance of teaching a skill, minimal contact should be involved and none which places the **adult** in a position of power and/or intimidation; for example, taking a **player** by the shoulders and physically moving them to another field or body position.
- ❖ Sexual contact of any kind or type is prohibited between **adults** and **players**, whether or not contact is consensual. [The exemption to this guideline would be in the event of player/coach spouses or legally-declared domestic partners.]



II. Social Contact

- ❖ **Adults** should not socialize or spend time alone with **players** except at games, practices, or team functions. An **adult** in a one-on-one situation with a **player** is generally inappropriate.
- ❖ **Adults** acting “in loco parentis” are responsible for monitoring the whereabouts of their **players**.
- ❖ **Adults** should avoid instances such as driving alone with a non-family **player**. However, in the event that a **player** remains on a field waiting for transportation, the **adult** should wait with the **player on the field** to guarantee the **player’s** safety and well-being. (**Adults** should stress with their **players’** parents the responsibility for safe and timely transportation to and from the field.)
- ❖ During out-of-town tournaments, a non-parent/custodian **adult** shall not share any sleeping arrangements with a **player** or **players**.
- ❖ **Adults** should respect the privacy of **players**. If shower or changing room facilities are available, schedules should be arranged so that **adults** and **players** have separate use. If using a changing room, **adults** should provide privacy for **players** to make necessary preparations before entering for pre/post-game



discussions. In addition, **adults** should not allow others to enter except by the expressed wish of the **players** still present.

III. Health and Well-Being

- ❖ **Adults** share the responsibility for the **players'** health while at practices, scrimmages, and games. **Adults** should obtain a basic First Aid Certification. **Adults** should have **players'** release forms and medical kits with them at all times. **Adults** are responsible for ensuring that players returning from illness or injury are fully able to participate and **adults** should be familiar with local emergency procedures.



- ❖ **Adults** are also responsible for seeing that the field conditions are safe for the **players** and that the field equipment is in good, safe condition prior to the start of any activity. In particular, **adults** should ensure that all goals are securely anchored and that children do not climb on the goals.
- ❖ Head injuries resulting in disorientation should result in a **player** remaining out of the game.
- ❖ **Adults** transporting players must model safe driving techniques and enforce seat belt use with **players** and other vehicle occupants.
- ❖ **Adults** need to be aware of signs of neglect and abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) of the **players**. Observations should be reported to the local law enforcement agency.

IV. Language and Behavior

- ❖ **Adults** should establish and model high ethical and moral standards. Offensive and insulting language by **adults** or **players** is unacceptable. **Adults** should model good communication skills.



- ❖ Language that is denigrating in nature, content or tone or refers to one's gender, race, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or religion is unacceptable.
- ❖ Inappropriate language or gestures targeting officials, opponents, or spectators may be grounds for **player** penalties or **adults'** removal from the game and/or the premises.

V. Violations

- Violations of these guidelines by **adults** or **players** will subject them to disciplinary actions, including but not limited to, warnings, sanctions, suspensions or release by the affiliate member and the home youth state association.
- Appropriate legal authorities may be called upon based on the nature of the violation.
- Anyone witnessing a violation of these guidelines should report the violation to the home youth state association.

Finally...

In addition to the mandatory bi-annual background checks, coaches and other **adults** involved with local soccer organizations can help minimize their risk of legal action by...

- ❖ Attaining levels of coaching education commensurate with the age and ability of their **players**; and by developing a working knowledge of age and ability-appropriate coaching and training practices.
- ❖ Each coach should obtain a basic refereeing certification and gain a working knowledge of the laws and their application



US Youth Soccer and ChoicePoint

US Youth Soccer and ChoicePoint (NYSE: CPS), the nation's leading provider of pre-employment background screening services, have joined forces to bring affordable screening capabilities to the nation's largest youth sports organization.

Combined with US Youth Soccer's nine-year-old Kidsafe program, this new membership benefit is a giant step towards the greater protection of US Youth Soccer's 3.2 million members. With ChoicePoint's assistance, US Youth Soccer now provides the direct means for State Associations to perform background checks on all volunteers at 80% below retail costs.

"At US Youth Soccer, we provide The Game for All Kids!" said US Youth Soccer President David Messersmith. "Our mission of providing a fun and healthy sport is easy to understand, however, the selection of the VolunteerSelectSM program demonstrates clearly how seriously we also take the protection and safety of our youth."

"All parents, coaches and volunteers are committed to providing a safe and secure recreational environment for our children," said Derek Smith, chairman and CEO of ChoicePoint, the company that developed and supports VolunteerSelect. "That's why it makes sense to employ the positive power of information and screen all volunteers who participate in US Youth Soccer using industry-standard background screening tools and technology."

VolunteerSelect enables US Youth Soccer affiliates to access state and county criminal screening databases and state sex offender databases to assist in determining whether adult volunteers are hiding a criminal past and represent a risk to members.

If a match is found on a volunteer applicant, he or she will be sent a copy of the information and can dispute the findings. US Youth Soccer and the affiliate that sponsors the applicant will then determine how to proceed. The intent of the background screening is not to arbitrarily dismiss a volunteer who may have a criminal conviction in their past; rather, it is to identify individuals who may pose a risk to children or others.

Until now, US Youth Soccer's Kidsafe program only provided policy recommendations to be initiated at the State Association-level. Each US Youth Soccer member State Association, league, and club now has the capability to screen all volunteers using national databases.

For more information please log on to www.choicepoint.com or usyouthsoccer.org.





Parent Education

“Parents dream of their child’s future but sometimes get so attached to their own dreams that they lose sight of what the child wants.” Shane Murphy, Sports Psychologist.

On observing a U-9 game in California....

The parents screamed and shouted. It seemed like they only stopped long enough to catch their breath. “Kick it straight!... Kick it out of bounds!... Get the ball!...Chase it!” They were yelling at the players on the team that was winning by at least four goals. I said to Bert, (Mendelbaum, US National Team Doctor) “This is unbelievable.” He turned to me and explained, “You have no idea. They’re behaving well today because they’re winning. You should see what they’re like when it’s a close game.” Claudio Reyna, US World Cup Captain.





“For some reason, adults – some who can’t even kick a ball – think it’s perfectly okay to scream at children while they’re playing soccer. How normal would it seem if a mother gave a six-year-old some crayons and a coloring book and started screaming? “Use the red crayon! Stay in the lines! Don’t use yellow!” You think that child would develop a passion for drawing? Most important, parents must realize that playing sports is a way for children to express themselves.” Claudio Reyna, US World Cup Captain

US Youth Soccer’s Online Tool for Soccer Parents

US Youth Soccer offers an interactive online tool to assist parents as they support their youth athlete. Designed for parents in the game of soccer to aid their efforts in growing the spirit without limiting the child, [The Parent’s Guide – An Introduction to Youth Soccer](#) is an online self-exploratory exercise in enhancing the experiences of players and their families.

The Parents Guide is an overview of best practices and philosophy, answering questions ranging from 'How to be supportive soccer parents' and 'How to meet your child’s needs' to 'The ride home' as well as 'Dealing with your child’s coach.'



In addition to the online presentation, the US Youth Soccer Coaching Education Department and Coaching Committee has created a short quiz to further the educational aspect of the guide. After successful completion of the course parents can personalize the certificate of completion with their name.

“We are proud to offer this educational opportunity to our parents and look forward to additional tools to further our game through the generations of soccer families ahead,” said Larry Monaco, president of US Youth Soccer.

Parents and Coaches Together (PACT)

Parents and Coaches Together (PACT) is an educational program developed at the University of Notre Dame’s Center for Ethical Education and Development. The program is based on the latest research from developmental and sports psychology and is designed to help coaches and parents to get on the same page in successfully creating a positive and nurturing climate in Minnesota youth soccer.



Minnesota Youth Soccer Association/PACT™ helps coaches and parents realize their unique roles in fostering athlete intrinsic motivation, developing character, optimal performance, well-being and satisfaction. This program helps develop the potential of youth soccer to all it can, and should be! Currently over 18 million children in the United States under the age of 18 play soccer. Despite these impressive statistics, research shows that by age 13, 70% of children drop out of organized youth sport, and participation trends in soccer are no exception.



Young athletes participate in sports because it is fun, and they learn new skills, make friends, improve fitness and enjoy the competition. Coaches and parents create a climate that influences young athletes' sport enjoyment and participation. Adults are a critical part in ensuring youth continue to play soccer and more importantly enjoy soccer.

MYSA has conducted more than many PACT Coach training sessions over the first few years of the program. Prior to conducting training sessions, MYSA and the University of Notre Dame surveyed the MYSA membership to measure attitudes and opinions of players, parents and coaches regarding sideline behavior. The good news, according to Nicole LaVoi, Sports Psychologist and member of the University of Notre Dames' team at the Center for Ethics in Education, is "an overwhelming majority of athletes, coaches and parents report positive experiences within Minnesota Youth Soccer Association." This is encouraging, but we know that we can do better because athletes report a greater frequency of perceived yelling at teammates (42%) and referees (35%), than did parents who reported yelling at players (9%) and referees (9%). Coaches self reported yelling at players (8%) and referees (20%), which is a rate far less than perceived by their players.



Research has shown that improved sideline behavior is directly related to player's performance. Minnesota athletes reported the predominant factor in coaches creating a toxic climate for them currently is the emphasis on outperforming teammates, and the coach favoring some athletes over others. The PACT training is designed to help coaches explore ways of intrinsically motivating players to be the best player they can be.

Positive Parenting DVD

With the release of “Positive Parenting”, US Youth Soccer furthers its commitment to creating a supportive environment for young athletes. The US Youth Soccer Coaching Education Department, in cooperation with the Coaching and Recreational Committees, has created this ‘view from the sidelines’ in an effort to create a positive learning environment for those involved in the lives of young soccer players. The Department is proud to provide a teaching tool designed for administrators, coaches, parents and anyone who cares about children to assist them in providing positive learning atmosphere for our children. The DVD will assist adults in helping young players play and keeping the fun in youth sports.

“The Positive Parenting for Youth Soccer DVD is yet another resource from US Youth Soccer to support the game for all kids,” said Sam Snow, director of coaching education for US Youth Soccer. “The DVD will contribute to a healthy and developmentally appropriate environment for youth soccer players.”

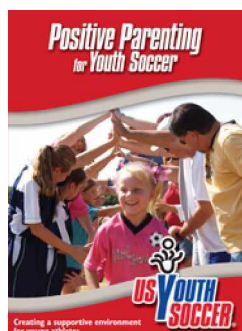
Positive Parenting discusses the practice and game environment as well as the ride home, each from the perspective of the players, referees and coaches.

"Positive Parenting addresses positive behavior and supportive techniques to enhance the players' enjoyment of the game," said Larry Monaco, president of US Youth Soccer. "The DVD is reasonably priced so it can be used by everyone and believes it to be an asset to those working with our youth players."

This presentation provides a unique blend of psychology/philosophy and interviews with children of various ages. This video provides insight on:

- Why children play
- Teaching sportsmanship by example
- How to be supportive soccer parents
- Developing vs. winning
- Red cards for parents
- Emotional needs of players
- Keeping it all in perspective

To learn more about Positive Parenting for Youth Soccer visit USYouthSoccer.org. USYouthSoccer.org also offers a number of resources for coaches, parents and soccer enthusiasts from DVDS, books, downloadable materials, articles on player development, coaching education and fitness to the latest news on the various programs offered by US Youth Soccer.





Kohl's American Cup

*Good programs begin by being intrinsically interesting and rewarding.
Shane Murphy, Sports Psychologist.*



Kohl's American Cup

The Kohl's US Youth Soccer American Cup provides recreational youth soccer players an opportunity to experience a consistent and high quality statewide tournament in a fun, festival-like atmosphere. It fosters stimulation and excitement about soccer in an effort to increase the recreational player's interest in and love for the game.



We want the recreational player to feel special and have fun! The Kohl's American Cup can achieve this by providing recreational players with the opportunity to participate in an original event outside of their normal league play. The American Cup gives State Associations another benefit to bring even more service to current members and a tool to use in increasing membership enrollment.





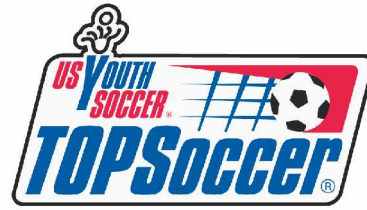
TOPSoccer

The Game for ALL Kids!



TOPSoccer

US Youth Soccer TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) is a community-based training and team placement program for young athletes with disabilities, organized by youth soccer association volunteers. The program is designed to bring the opportunity of learning and playing soccer to any boy or girl, ages 4-19, who has a mental or physical disability. Our goal is to enable the thousands of young athletes with disabilities to become valued and successful members of the US Youth Soccer family.



How do I participate?

Contact your local US Youth Soccer State Association office to find out more about getting involved with a local US Youth Soccer TOPSoccer program. A list of Region II State Associations can be found starting on page 82.

Why do we need a TOPSoccer Program?

TOPSoccer was formed to perpetuate the US Youth Soccer mission statement which is, in part, "to foster the physical, mental and emotional growth and development of America's youth through the sport of soccer at all levels of age and competition." There are thousands of children with disabilities who need, and can be provided with, the opportunity to play soccer through the TOPSoccer program.

Getting Started

1. Identify the need in your area.

- For what type of disabilities do you need to plan?
- Are you able to fulfill these needs?



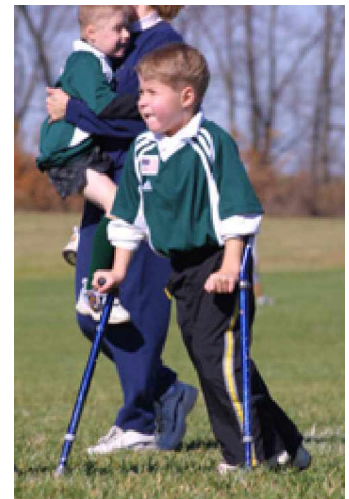
2. Check for any restrictions placed on the facility (ies) you plan to use.
3. Are they equipped to handle athletes with physical disabilities?
4. Check with your soccer insurance carrier.
5. Contact established programs for information.

- US Youth Soccer
- Special Olympics

- United Cerebral Palsy
 - Shriners
6. Contact your local school districts and universities.
 7. Create a list of people who are able to assist you.
 8. Plan your advertisements.
 9. Get the support of your State Association and Regional -TOPSoccer Representative, and use them as resources.

Creating Your Program

1. The unique thing about TOPSoccer is that each program is different and is created around the needs of the participants. Additionally, TOPSoccer athletes are placed on teams according to ability, not age.
2. Length of program is determined by organizer (6-8 weeks)
3. Playing rules.
 - Create rules to fit specific needs.
 - Use the US Youth Soccer U-6, U-8 or U-10 guidelines
4. TOPSoccer programs can have very modest beginnings.
5. For those athletes not able to participate due to medical reasons, design a skills program that is rewarding, challenging and fun.
6. Variety of choices.
 - Small-sided games (3 v 3, 4 v 4, 8 v 8, etc.)
 - Full-sided games (11v11)
 - Unified teams (ratio of challenged athletes to non-challenged athletes)
 - Indoor programs Outdoor program
 - Camps
 - Skills only
7. Above all... keep it simple... KEEP IT FUN!



Placement and Registration of Athletes

1. Registration procedures should be the same as those used for regular league teams.
 - Registration form should include a section for medical history.

- Athletes with Down-syndrome should be required to have a current x-ray. If the x-ray is positive for their safety, it should be strongly recommended that they do not take part in team play.
 - In some cases medical waivers may be required.
2. Placement is made by ability not age.
 3. Assessment test should be made available upon request.
 4. Ensure that the experience is meaningful for the participating athletes, and one in which they feel they have made a contribution.

Recruiting Coaches

1. Contact local universities, schools and soccer clubs for volunteers. The State Coach or Director of Coaching for the state association is also a good source for coaches. No special training is required, however it is available:



- Through US Youth Soccer and state association sponsored coaching courses.
- Through Special Olympics.

Cost Involved

1. Costs vary depending upon your registration fees and insurance fees, and uniform and equipment costs.
2. Cost should be kept low and affordable to all possible participants.
3. Grants are available through US Youth Soccer.
4. There are philanthropic entities, such as the Shriners which offer assistance. Research others in the local community (Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, etc.).
5. Approach local companies or corporations for cash or in-kind donations.



Helpful Hints

1. Use color coded goals or nets (e.g., red goals/yellow nets).
2. Have scrimmage vests available.
3. Have a ball for each athlete.
4. HAVE FUN!



Soccer Start

America's first world-class soccer star will most likely come from the inner cities. Anonymous.



Soccer Start

Soccer Start is designed to introduce the sport of soccer to youngsters living in communities not yet served by existing clubs and leagues. Focused on making soccer available to lower-income children in underserved communities, Soccer Start provides soccer training and administrative guidance to players and organizations who might otherwise not be exposed to the sport. Soccer Start also helps new programs find the funding and equipment to begin and then to expand their activities. In the past several years, US Youth Soccer has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars in financial and material support to programs across the United States.



How do I participate?

Contact your local US Youth Soccer State Association office to find out more about getting involved with a local Soccer Start program. You can find State Association by clicking [here](#). Or, simply contact your respective Soccer Start Committee member by using the e-mail addresses listed below.



Why do we need a Soccer Start Program?

Soccer is the fastest growing sport in the United States. It has reached into communities from coast to coast and from north to south. Yet, soccer has not always served inner city and rural communities and all economic and ethnic groups. In order to insure that every child has the opportunity to play our beautiful game, US Youth Soccer founded the Soccer Start program.

Goals of Soccer Start

- ❖ To reach out to children in under-served and socio-economically disadvantaged places in order to offer them an on-going program of positive sports activities through soccer.
- ❖ To increase participants self-esteem through participation in an organized and supportive program of team activities.
- ❖ To build positive social and life skills.
- ❖ To provide important exercise and increase awareness of one's own health through sports.

- ❖ To provide the players with positive, cooperative and enjoyable after school and spare time activities

Creating Your Own Program

Soccer Start programs are run locally by existing clubs and leagues, by Boys and Girls Clubs and Y's, by neighborhood houses and Parks and Recreation Departments. There is no "one size fits all" model for Soccer Start.



Each program starts differently and is created locally to meet the needs and capabilities of the organization and of the players. Programs in the nation's biggest cities may include thousands of children, and yet there are hundreds of small programs that focus on one or two teams, one group of kids in a single neighborhood house or one corner of a rural farming community.

Programs may last as little as a few weeks in the fall to as much as full seasons in more than one part of the year. Many programs adopt traditional soccer rules with full-sized fields and full length games while other choose to introduce soccer through "small-sided games" on smaller fields. The choices about how to begin are as varied as the places in which they begin. Soccer Start can help your community decide on how to get started by providing written information and hands-on technical assistance.



The First Steps

- Create local awareness of your efforts to begin a Soccer Start program
- Talk to U S Youth Soccer and your State Association for written and programmatic support
- Seek out other Soccer Start programs near you and try to learn what worked for them. Often, Soccer Start sites in the same state have a lot in common.
- Identify a local coordinator, and if possible, a visible role model (well-known soccer person such a professional player, a college coach, even older players (high school or college from your community or nearby communities)
- Find a coaching instructor
- Identify all the adult administrative functions you will need and develop a volunteer base, as necessary, to fill those functions
- Seek community leadership support first from existing soccer organizations and programs, but also from: Boys and Girls Clubs;



Neighborhood Centers; Police Athletic Leagues; YMCA/YWCA; Housing Authorities; Park and Recreation Departments; High School and College Service Organizations; Churches

- Ask for help from local and State soccer organizations: In setting up basic organizational structures from legal formation to functions needed on your start-up Board of Directors; In finding coaches, especially youth coaches; In finding a trainer for your new coaches; In setting up equipment exchanges; In helping with scheduling questions
- Seek community-based financial support from: service organizations such as Kiwanis and Rotary; Churches; Neighborhood small business such as restaurants, record stores, clothing outlets, sports stores; Service providers such as neighborhood doctors; Any other business which is active in the Soccer Start neighborhood-it is in their interest to help
- Identify your equipment and supply needs and look for sources to get them donated or to acquire them at the lowest cost to you. Ask existing organizations where they get their equipment and see if you can set up a way to acquire used equipment from them.
- Develop instruction agendas and plans of action for: Administrators, Coaches, Referees

Implementation

In order to promote the Soccer Start program at the local levels and gain community involvement and awareness, certain equipment, services and financial support is needed. Some of these needs are:

- Leadership, high-profile spokespersons and role models
- Local organization, implementation and administration through volunteer coordinators
- Caring volunteers willing to commit sufficient time to the program as referees, coaches, managers, drivers and chaperons
- Equipment
- Fields or open playing areas
- Transportation
- Corporate, private and community financial support



Support Network

- Local leadership, organizers and soccer clubs and leagues
- State association Soccer Start Committee representative or coordinator
- State association Soccer Start/Recreation Representative to the state Board of Directors
- US Youth Soccer / Soccer Start Committee and regional representatives



- Distribution of program materials and educational opportunities
- Soccer Start website
- US Youth Soccer national staff

Costs Involved

- The cost of participation varies depending upon your registration fees, insurance premiums and uniform and equipment costs.
- At all times, cost should be kept to a minimum for all possible participants.
- Grants are available through US Youth Soccer and the US Soccer Federation Foundation.
- There are other philanthropic entities, such as the Shriners, which offer assistance. Research other avenues of funding such as local, state and federal government grants and community groups such as the Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
- Approach local retailers, companies or corporations for cash or in-kind donations.





Coaches Connection

*The education is over; let the learning begin.
Sign on Butler University, IN Graduation Office.*



Coaches Connection

US Youth Soccer has added another educational opportunity for coaches, referees, administrators and parents with the addition of the Coaches Connection.



The Coaches Connection provides members with a link to the US Youth Soccer Coaching Education Network: The National Director of Coaching Education and staff, plus 55 State Association Directors of Coaching Education and their staff, as well as guest lectures from around the world!

“It’s all about connectivity and the ability to communicate with our educators from all across the country,” said Sam Snow, Director of Coaching Education for US Youth Soccer.

Get connected with leaders in the field of coaching, referee education and player development. Stay current with discussions on such hot topics as small-sided games; recreation vs. competitive soccer; parent education, ethics and morals in sport.

Keep connected with continuing education opportunities on-line at **USYouthSoccer.org**. Get the latest information on training youth players, learn the latest in age appropriate training activities, and find out where and when special events will be in a location near you!



Coaches Connection benefits include:

- Subscription to **Success in Soccer** Magazine
- US Youth Soccer’s Kwik Kicks monthly e-newsletter
- Official “Coaches Connection” member T-shirt from adidas
- Copy of the Official US Youth Soccer Coaching Manual
- Discounts on official adidas apparel and other US Youth Soccer merchandise.
- Discounted admission to special Connection clinics and events
- Discounts on coaching aids from Success in Soccer

To register today, visit [USYouth Soccer.org](http://USYouthSoccer.org)

Stay connected year-round!



US Youth Soccer adidas Coaches Workshop and Convention



US Youth Soccer adidas Workshop and Convention

The US Youth Soccer adidas Workshop and Convention is traditionally held in February or March and is the largest of its kind for youth sports in North America, features more than 90 educational workshops and demonstrations for administrators, coaches, referees, parents and soccer enthusiasts.

The event features the announcement of the US Youth Soccer adidas Coach of the Year as well as an exhibit hall with over 200 exhibitors featuring the latest soccer equipment, technology, apparel, fundraising ideas and more.

In addition to learning from some of the leading clinicians in the areas of coaching and player development, the event includes topics from the challenges and realities of international travel, risk management, organizing and financing field development. You will also hear the latest in marketing techniques and tactics, sports medicine and nutritional topics, developing and retaining youth referees and recreational, elite and disabled players.

Full registration fee includes entry to all workshops, US Youth Soccer adidas Coach of the Year dinner, President's Reception, Coach of the Year Celebration, and Grand Opening of the Exhibit Hall. All official activities of the event are intended for adults. A one-day pass for Friday or Saturday may be purchased on-site to access the educational seminars and exhibits only. Registering for the event does not include a room reservation. More information is available on USYouthSoccer.org regarding hotel blocks.

More than 3,000 registered guests typically attend the US Youth Soccer adidas Workshop and Convention.

For more information, visit USYouthSoccer.org.





Region II State Associations





ILLINOIS YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

1655 S. Arlington Hts. Rd. #201
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
847-290-1577 (O) 847-290-1576 (F)
Web Site: www.illinoisyouthsoccer.org



INDIANA YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

5440 Herbert Lord Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216
317-829-0560 (O) 317-829-0555 (F)
1-800-347-4972
Web Site: www.inyouthsoccer.org

IOWA SOCCER



IOWA SOCCER ASSOCIATION

3850 Merle Hay Road, Suite 524
Des Moines, IA 50310
515-252-6363 (O) 515-252-7676 (F)
Web Site: www.iowasoccer.org



KANSAS STATE YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

708 South Rogers Rd., Ste. C
Olathe, KS 66062
913-648-6434 (O) 913-648-0564 (F)
Web Site: www.kansasyouthsoccer.org



KENTUCKY YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

443 South Ashland Avenue, Suite 201
Lexington, KY 40502
859-268-1254 (O) 859-269-0545 (F)
Web Site: www.kysoccer.net



MICHIGAN STATE YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

Michigan State Youth Soccer Association
9401 General Drive, Suite 120
Plymouth, MI 48170
734-459-6220 (O) 734-459-6242 (F)
Web Site: www.michiganyouthsoccer.org



MINNESOTA YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

11577 Encore Circle
Minnetonka, MN 55343
952-933-2384 (O) 952-933-2627 (F)
Web Site: www.mnyouthsoccer.org



MISSOURI YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

5650 Mexico Rd., Ste. 22
St. Peters, MO 63376
636-947-8442 (O) 636-947-7626 (F)
Web Site: www.mysa.org



NEBRASKA STATE SOCCER ASSOCIATION

10700 Sapp Brothers Drive, Ste. B.
Omaha, NE 68138
402-596-1616 (O) 402-596-0660 (F)
Web Site: www.nebraskasoccer.org



NORTH DAKOTA YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

3022 Walnut
Grand Forks, ND 58201
701-746-6029 (O)
Web Site: www.eteamz.com/ndysa



OHIO YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION-NORTH

P.O. Box 367
Richfield, OH 44286
330-659-0989 (O) 330-659-0993 (F)
Web Site: www.oysan.org



OHIO SOUTH YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

25 Whitney Drive, Suite #104
Milford, OH 45150
Web Site: www.osysa.com



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE SOCCER ASSOCIATION

3701 Freda Circle
Sioux Falls, SD 57103
605-371-2255 (O) 605-371-2255 (F)
Web Site: www.southdakotasoccer.org



WISCONSIN SOCCER ASSOCIATION, INC.

10708 West Hayes Avenue
West Allis, WI 53227
414-545-7227 (O) 414-545-7249 (F)
Web Site: www.wiyouthsoccer.com





The Youth Soccer Coach
by
Mike Berticelli
(1952-2000)



You donate your time for the good of our youth,
But you scream and you yell and are often uncouth.

The ref is just twelve and still learning the game,
But you call him a jerk and say he's not sane.

You jump as you yell, "Pass the ball, pass the ball!"
You turn red as you bellow, "Ref, make the damn call!"

"You're the left back; now get in your position,
If you don't, we might lose and ruin our tradition!"

Positions are needed so we look like a team,
Cause they're miniature pros, or so it does seem.

The fullback is bored, he picks at his nose,
While the others run wild and kick with their toes.

You scream for a goal, no matter how it goes in,
The skill doesn't matter, just as long as we win!

The parents go crazy as the ball nears the goal,
Their advice and instructions will soon take their toll.

You see, Junior feels pressure; he's not having much fun,
We tell him to pass, when to shoot and to run.

He came here to play and to use his own mind,
'Cause soccer's the most creative game you'll find.

Imagination is needed on the part of each child,
Solving problems on the field is what makes them go wild.

A week of long practice; while just standing in line,
Waiting to shoot, using one ball at a time.

This just doesn't cut it; and for some it's too late.
Make your practices fun; don't be the coach that they hate.

They come to "play" soccer; not just to "work" at their game.
Their excitement is something we don't want to tame.

Maradona has moves that are beyond comprehension,
No coach taught those moves while threatening detention!

He learned from his friends and tried to copy others,
While playing in games, without coaches or mothers.

Soccer is different; not like baseball at all.
We don't need positions, just give them the ball!

They must first learn skill; it's the meat of the game.
If they can't dribble or shoot, who then should we blame?

Skill must be learned through repeated trials.
If motivation is present, you will see them run miles.

Fun games are the answer to encourage repetition.
They laugh and they scream and enjoy competition.

Without the skill to dribble past an opponent at will,
Your players will win, but their growth will stand still.

I dream of the day when the parents just cheer,
And losing the game doesn't bring out a tear.

When practice is fun; not dull and so boring,
And playing the game means more than just scoring.

I know you mean well and you donate your time,
But bury your ego and try something sublime.

Call at the parents and ask for their aid,
You're teaching their kids and not getting paid.

You goal's to develop a youngster with skill,
Not a team that must win or some fancy new drill.

You see, players are not judged by their wins and their losses,
Instead they are judged by the shots, heads and crosses.

Scholarships are given to players with great names,
Not those on youth teams who never lost a game.

A pro player gets paid 'cause his skills are real fine,
Not because his team never lost when he was nine.

It's time to bring soccer to new heights in this nation,
The future's in players, not a coaching citation.

Let's start to "dribble" and stop yelling "pass!"
You'll then see our players go to the head of the class.

I hope you're concerned; but not really offended,
It's the need for more skill that I have defended.

You're giving your all, for the good of the heart,
Why not make sure that kids get the right start?

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