

The John Abe Soccer Training Curriculum

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When preparing training sessions: Emphasis technical, tactical, physical and psychological development within your training framework. The ultimate goal of each coach should be to prepare the players to compete at the next level. Take into account:

- * Age of the player (Prepare objectives linked to that age)
- * Ability of the players

- Coaches have access to many exercises and drills. The coach must know how to prepare and what to present within the exercises. They must know what they want out of any exercise, and how to achieve what they want.
- Proper technical advice and demonstration is very important to the player developing proper form and technical ability. Be careful of your language in order to help players understand your methods. The players must also understand how the exercise relates to the game

Priorities:

- To develop players to top level to give them the maximum chance of succeeding.
- To develop young boys and girls in life skills, in and out of the soccer environment.
- To make sure players keep up with their academics.
- To be involved in community service activities

Training:

- Emphasizes on repeating the quality of soccer movement and technical skills, with correct form.
- Corrected and repeated until they become a regular part of the players' package of skills.
- Must have quality demonstration.
- Emphasis on making players movements faster and better.
- Linking movements efficiently and wisely. Asking players why they use a certain move in a certain situation.
- Using the weakest foot.
- Technical exercises with high repetition and reoccurrence.
- Games with many choices and reflection.
- Simplistic exercises forcing players to make good decisions.
- Realistic activities making the player feel as if they were in the real game

Context of Training:

- **Quantity, Quality, Consistency and Simplicity with the demands of the game.**

This work is most important. The better job we do as coaches in the development of the quality of players the more accomplished high school, ODP, collegiate and professional players will come about.

The U-7 and U-8 Program:

- Not a competitive stage.
- Players are starting to emulate their sports heroes.
- It is difficult for them to really be aware of more than one thing at a time.
- They can start to follow two or three steps at a time.
- Just starting to cooperate with teammates.
- They must be able to have fun.
- Activities should be geared to individual success and participation.
- Small- sided games are starting to be understood.
- They need many touches on the ball.
- Passing is not an important part of their game.

Training Time: About one-hour sessions approximately two times per week.

Provide a structured non-result based fun learning environment.

Teaching should be:

- Love of the game.
- Technical skills
- Development of coordination
- Individual Creativity

Players should play games that are not result based. Players can be randomly selected into teams of four. Warm-ups-with fast footwork or new ways to control the ball while moving, are good warm ups. Tagging games, keep a way games are also good. Be creative in your warm-ups

Important to learn:

- Running with the ball at speed.
- Dribbling with the ball under close control.
- Receiving the ball and controlling the ball. (On the ground and in the air)
(New ways to control the ball)
- Turns with the ball- it is important they learn basic inside and outside turns.
- Passing and shooting is not as important and individual control of the ball.
- Introduce body feints.
- Changes of speed and directions
- Emphasis on finding space to dribble to.
- Starting to keep and play with the head up. (See the ball and developing play at the same time)
- Play with both right and left foot.
- Shielding

Note-it is most important to introduce skills with proper technique. Introduce skills from simple and slowly make more complex and slowly add pressure

Teaching:

- Small-sided games.
- Fun games
- 1v1, 2v2, 3v3, 4v4
- Learning at least one new technique each session.
- Make training mostly technical in nature, with very little tactical at this stage.
- Fun activities
- Activities to develop agility and physical body movement.

Training Session:

- Warm-up
- Individual Activities
- Small Group Activities
- The game or Scrimmage
- Warm down and Homework

Make it fun, with them wanting to come back and play again. Make them feel good about themselves. Emphasis should be on good technique and good ball control.

The U-9 and U-10 Player

- Motor skills are becoming more refined.
- Ability to stay on task is lengthened.
- Able to pace themselves and think ahead.
- Starting to recognize basic tactical concepts.
- Repetition of proper technique is very important.
- Continued positive reinforcement needed.
- Becoming more serious and there is more intensity in play and more competitive.
- More inclined towards wanting to play instead of being told to play

The U-9 and U-10 Player

- Some players have been playing for a few years now. Some are starting to become quite skillful now and are starting to really have good control of the ball.
- Emphasis is still placed on players learning to control the ball with all parts of the body.
- They need to find themselves in more game like situations.
- Coaches should be able to make sure proper technical skills are being used. A small-sided game gives them many touches on the ball, and starts the process of simple basic decisions. Stretching should come into the picture after a good warm-up. The coach must have knowledge of the key factors of basic skills. The coach must be sensitive, enthusiastic, patient and encouraging.
- Players should still play all positions (keeper is optional). They can start to learn basic principles of play.
- Allow them to experiment and solve their own puzzles

Training twice a week –one hour fifteen minutes to one and one half hours

Important to Learn

- All technical skills learned at the U-8 level should be refined, done with more speed. Correct technique is most important.
- Receiving the ball on the ground and in the air.
- Trapping the ball with different surfaces.
- Dribbling under control
- Dribbling at speed and with changes of direction.
- Expand their range of surfaces to receive and pass the ball. (Inside, outside, instep, sole, thigh and chest.
- Passing with the outside, inside, instep, heel and toe.
- Use both feet.

Important to Learn

- They can be introduced to the volley, half volley, side volley, and curl and bending of the ball. Also an introduction of the ball being driven, chipped, lofted.
- Juggling
- Intro to heading, with some caution. (Using low inflated balls or a softer ball may be the first choice.
- Coerver moves are essential (Wiel Coerver training)
- Finishing and shooting with both feet.
- Disguise and deception should be encouraged.
- Teaching the use of hips to deceive the opponent can be introduced.

Tactics:

- 1v1 individual tactics in attack and defense. Play 1v1 frequently.
- Small group activities and games to help suggest and develop tactical awareness.
- In games players should be encouraged to control the ball, and not just boot the ball away. They should also be taught to come to the ball when receiving it.
- Receiving the ball is most important to learn correctly at this stage. The ball should be able to be received under control, with a good first touch.

Physical/ Psychological

- Flexibility, agility, speed, strength, endurance and balance done mostly with the ball and under game like conditions
- Keep it fun –foster a desire to play. (They want to play)
- Encourage decision-making
- Imagination/creativity
- Increase the demands of training
- Emphasize discipline
- Encourage players to watch professional games

The U-11 and U-12 Player

The continual development of individual skills along with the introduction of small group tactics. This is a very important stage of player development. This is a time of transition from self-centered to self-critical.

- The golden age of learning
- Important age for skill development
- Proper demonstration is very important
- Players learn best by doing
- Proper time to introduce the basic principles of play
- Discipline is important

The Coach:

- Good teacher
- Possess soccer experience and knowledge of the game
- Ability to demonstrate
- Good knowledge of technical aspects of soccer
- Can demand of the players, but also will be encouraging
- Recommended to have a USSF –D /Equivalent or higher at this level
- Proper training at this level is most important

TRAINING

- Training time should be about 70/30 % (Technical/Tactical). Emphases will still be on the development of new skills and the refinement of skills already learned. The technical and tactical speed of the player and their decision-making should be increased.
- Suggested training time would be at least two training sessions per week. Pre season may be three. One and one half hours of training per session is appropriate.
- Suggested training would be one session of a technical nature, and one session on a tactical theme or to work on improvement from the prior game.

Note: Technical development is still of utmost importance.

Technical Development:

- Continued proficiency of the technical skills already learned.
- Development of individual skills –under pressure of time, space and opponent.
- Increase of the player's technical speed of play

Note: Homework should become a part to the weekly training sessions.

Technical Skill Development

- Introduction of many dribbling moves to beat an opponent, keeping possession, changes of speed and direction.
- Risk taking and creativity should be encouraged.
- Shielding the ball, spin turns with changes of direction.
- Receiving under pressure with all legal surfaces of the body both ground and in the air.
- Passing with all surfaces-short and long passes, proper weight of the pass, all types of passing.
- Heading-important to teach proper technique, proper jumping both attacking and defending heading.
- Tackling, jockeying –with balance.
- Juggling the ball with movement and also between players.
- Running with the ball, dribbling and feints
- Finishing and shooting. (Both feet, precision more than power, placement)
- Ball control

Tactical Development:

- Basic tactical ideas and awareness.
- The understanding of individual and small group tactics.
- Increase tactical speed.
- Creating and exploiting of space on the attack.
- Proper movement with and without the ball.
- Penetrate as deeply as possible.
- Proper support and communication both on attack and on defense.
- Basics of set plays should be taught.
- Group defending (cover and balance)
- Compactness on defense
- Thirds of the field can be introduced

NOTE

Players are introduced to the 11 v 11 game. Basic system of play should only be developed with a basic understanding of positions. Players need to play all positions at this level (Goalkeeper the exception), to develop the total player.

Development through

- 1 V 1 situations in attack and defense.
- Small Group- 2v1, 2v2, 3v1, 3v2, 3v3, 4v2, 4v3, 4v4
- Attacking soccer with keeping possession, support, risk taking in the attacking third, Basic combination play (Wall Pass, takeover, double pass, the through ball)
- Defending with proper pressure, proper cover.

The Introduction of the clubs basic playing style

Team tactics are not the priority at this age. Focus on playing skillful soccer.

Note-this is only a brief introduction of the following with no explanation to the players –just introduced through small sided games.

- Defensive rotation
- Circulation of the ball

Clubs Aspects of Play:

- Ball on the ground except, long switching point of attack, long crosses or shots outside the 18-yard box.
- Triangle passes and triangle support (positive and negative)
- Minimize the number of touches on the ball. Speed of play, with low number of touches. (Fast and safe passes)
- Reception of the ball always facing the opposite side where the ball comes from. (See the full field)

Elements that should always be part of the training games and the system of play

- To help the ball carrier-to offer support
- To demand the ball
- To pass the ball and move off the pass.
- Coverage in the defense
- Positioning and the movement into space
- The entire team both attacks and defends

Complex Tactical games should be introduced:

- Numeric numbers up-Always seeking numbers up in tight space. The lower the numbers the more responsibility each player has.
- Reduce the playing area and reduce the numbers
- Lateral space
- Zones- changing the zones from large to small and visa versa.
- Incorporate games with four small goals to provide target areas.
- Partnering and linking up defenders, midfielders and attackers in different ways.
- Attacking in various ways and in waves
- Defending in waves.
- Zonal defending

*Team system of play in the 11 v 11 game is introduced.
However not the priority at this age*

Physical Development:

- All fitness should be built into the session with a ball.
- Coordination
- Flexibility
- Change of speed and pace
- Balance
- Strength
- Endurance

Psychological Development:

Most important soccer must be kept **fun**.

- Develop a passion in the players for the game
- Encourage decision making
- Imagination/Creativity
- Increase demands on the players
- Establish discipline and accountability
- Encourage players to watch professional games

The U13 and U14 player

- The age of physical and mental maturation, therefore the pace of development will quicken. The technical demands of training and training loads should increase. This increase stimulates improvement in mental toughness and concentration.
- Tactical awareness becomes an important part of the learning process. Players tend to have a very strong commitment to the team. Players can be rebellious, and are self-critical.
- At the level players can participate in three training periods and one match per week. In the pre season stage it could be four training periods.
- Training time should be approximately one and one half hour per session. An occasional two-hour session in the pre season is acceptable.

Priorities of this stage

- The player decides what to do with the ball.
- They start to personalize their game.
- Players tend to start to decide on positions they like to play and feel comfortable at in the game. However, players should still play various positions to develop the total player.
- The coach must decide on the activities to bring out the individual's technique.
- Players should continue to play with the ball at the training sessions.
- Build on the technical base established. Continue on the pursuit of technical proficiency. **Note**-the technical base should have been laid and the player should be proficient in their technical skill level at this stage.
- Development of individual skills under pressure of time, space and the opponent.
- Increase technical speed.
- Technical development should still be 70% of training time

Skill Development:

- Technical development through repetition.
- Dribbling-players should become proficient at beating the opponent 1v1.
- Fakes, moves, keeping possession, changes of speed and direction, shielding and turning.
- Receiving the ball with a quality first touch from the air and the ground. Receiving with different surfaces and on the run at speed. Turning while receiving the ball.
- Finishing from all angles, on the run, on the turn, back to goal, technical quality of volleys and half volleys.
- Passing with all surfaces, on the run. The weight and accuracy of the pass is important. Short, long, bent, driven, crosses and chipped balls.
- Heading-Attacking and defending headers, also to pass and keep possession.
- Tackling-proper technique, jockeying, proper pressure

Tactical Development:

- Tactical awareness
- Increase of tactical speed (Decision making under pressure)
- Individual 1 V 1 situations in attack and defense
- Risk taking in appropriate areas of the pitch.
- Finishing and shooting
- Angles of support
- Proper angles of pressure on defense (in front and behind)
- Channeling on defense
- Immediate chase and pressure on the ball on defense
- Understand individual roles in zonal and man on man defending. (The role of the marking backs)

Attacking Activities:

- Maintaining Possession
- Support
- Combination play-wall pass, take-over, overlap, and double pass-third man running.
- Width, depth and penetration
- Proper runs in the box for crosses
- Proper runs
- Basis understanding of set plays.
- Understanding angles-distance, cover and balance on defense
- Delay and pressuring (individual and group)
- Understanding danger and the danger zones

Team Tactics:

- Maintaining possession while playing the ball away from pressure.
- Maintaining Balance within the system of play.
- Players able to interchange positions during the course of play.
- Attackers encouraged taking on players in the final third.
- Players are able to play a variety of positions.
- The goalkeeper plays as an attacker with balls played back to the goalkeeper and the goalkeeper understanding how to start the attack.
- Players able to play out of the back on the attack.
- Maintaining good team shape on defense.
- Understand the basics of zonal defending.
- Maintaining good pressure and cover.
- Understanding the thirds of the field and the basic tactics within those areas.
- Understand and decide where the line of confrontation will be.
- Understand high pressure and low pressure.
- Know when to delay or step on defense.

Small Group Activities

- 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, 3v3, 4v2, 4v4

Players should develop an understanding for team shape and how to use combination play on attack. They should understand and use different methods of attack (through balls, crossing and so on).

They should understand the importance of when to use quick transition and when to keep possession to gain numeric superiority. The team begins to understand zonal defending and the importance of a cohesive unit when applying pressure.

Refine club “aspects of play” that was introduced at the U12-U13 level.

Physical Development:

- Agility and coordination with and without the ball.
- Flexibility
- Change of speed and pace
- Balance
- Most fitness should be built into the session with a ball
- Appropriate sprinting to help develop speed should be a part of training.
- Strength-non-weight bearing, core strength and stability.
- Endurance

Psychological development:

- Activities must be organized and well planned.
- The game must be fun and enjoyable.
- Players must develop a passion for the game.
- Demand concentration.
- Establish mental toughness, discipline and accountability.
- Establish training targets.
- Imagination and creativity
- Increase demands, value of hard work
- Set realistic goals for the season as a team.

The U15-U18 Player

At this age level players should be very proficient in their technical skills. They will become serious about their development as a player. They now will want to learn and expect the coach to give them the structure and environment to learn.

- Development of individual skills is still important (refinement of those skills)
- Individual, group and team tactics will be refined.
- This is a critical time in the development of the player. Many stop playing due to other interest, lack of success, poor coaching, burnout or lack of mental toughness and self-confidence.
- A great focus will be on team spirit.
- Leadership and discipline within the team is important.

The Coach:

- The coach must be charismatic, experienced, knowledgeable, articulate, a disciplinarian, have managerial know-how, a thoughtful persuader. The coach must know the game. Serious players will seek out coaches that can help advance them as a player.

The Coach Must

- Plan everything-the situation
- Plan for proper competition with lots of opposition
- Plan the entire season, and refine according to the players and teams needs.
- Plan the sessions for efficiency

Technical Development:

It is necessary to repeat the technical quality of soccer movement. Proper technique should be demanded. Correction and repetition until a skill becomes a regular part of the player's package.

- Making the players movements faster and better.
- Linking movements efficiently and correctly.
- Coach asked the player why they use a certain move in a certain situation. The coach must know where and when certain skills can and should not be used.
- Using both feet.
- Develop specific training sessions to work on and improve player's weaknesses.
- Technical exercises with high repetition.

Training sessions:

- The training session should be three training sessions per week, with one match per week.
- The pre-season can be four training sessions. Training can be up to two hours.
- Intensity and recovery time now become important.
- The coach must understand work to rest ratios and how this best develops players.
- The training progressions are increased with intensity and difficulty. Players must be challenged.

Training sessions:

- Skill work is still of utmost importance.
- Tactical exercises which are specific in nature.
- Complex games for teaching.
- Teaching within the game.
- Work-rest ratio –work should be done mostly with the ball.
- Active rest
- Speed, strength, jumping movements.
- Agility training.
- Application of tactical exercises to the game.
- Friendly games with better and higher level opponents

Training sessions:

- Principals of play on the pitch, in lecture or on video.
- Functional or position specific training.
- Simple tactical exercises-forcing many choices and decisions.
- Games with many choices and decisions.
- Realistic activities to help the player understand use in the real game.
- Endurance, speed and agility/flexibility.
- Games of 1v1, 2v2, 3v3, and 4v4 with special attention paid to the rhythm and intensity of the game.
- 6v6, 7v7, 9v9 games with purpose are introduced.
- Movement without the ball becomes an important aspect of the player's ability to play the game.

Tactical Development:

Attacking: (Individual, small group and team)

- 1v1 situations (understand of 1v1 to place different demands on the player)
- Maintaining possession
- Risk taking in appropriate areas
- Creativity
- Finishing games
- Support and supporting angles (positive and negative)
- Combination play-wall, take-over, overlap, double pass.
- Width, depth penetration
- Switching the point of attack
- Proper runs
- More understanding of set plays.
- Playing away from pressure.
- Maintaining balance within the system of play.
- The goalkeeper plays an important part of the attack.
- The “total player” able to play different positions
- Communication
- Refinement of the clubs “aspect of play”

Tactical Development:

Defending: (Individual, small group and team)

- 1v1
- Proper angles of pressure (in front and behind)
- Channeling attackers.
- Immediate chase.
- Understand individual roles in zonal defending.
- Angles and distance of cover
- Balance
- Delay and pressure as a group
- Understanding danger and the danger areas.
- Maintaining good team shape.
- Basic zonal defending
- When to delay and when to step.
- Line of confrontation and where it will be established.
- Maintaining good pressure and cover in thirds of the pitch.

Tactical Development

- Players should understand defensive rotation and offensive circulation of the ball.
- The team begins to understand that maintaining possession to gain numeric superiority in the final third is of key importance. The team understands the importance of applying pressure as a cohesive unit on defense.
- *All members of the team attack and defend.*

Physical Development:

Hurdles, speed ladders can be used. Fitness should be built into training session with a ball.

- Changes of speed and pace
- Flexibility
- Agility/coordination-with and without the ball.
- Balance
- Endurance

Psychological:

- Increased concentration
- Leadership/player responsibilities
- Discipline
- Respect for the game
- Goal setting
- Vary the game-satisfy player's urge for competition.
- Establish pre-practice and pre-game routine (individual and team)
- Encourage players to watch professional games.
- Most important to keep it fun-players need to laugh

In Conclusion

- Our most important job as a coach is to develop players both in the game of soccer and in the game of life. We must be good role models to our players. We must show good sportsmanship. We must keep soccer fun for our players and for our selves.
- We must continue to develop our understanding of the game. The coach who thinks they have nothing more to learn is sadly mistaken. As hard as it may be we must develop players to the next level.
- Our development is of the player and not the coach's win/loss record.