



LOUDOUN SOCCER

Travel Program Training Curriculum (U9-U19)

Dave Edwards, Director of Coaching (Travel) (2009)

The purpose of this document

This document will be a continued work in progress as we, as a club, evolve with the demands of the game. It is important that we are listening closely to US Soccer, our state association (VYSA) and other soccer education bodies around the world so that we are developing our players appropriately and giving them the best possible chance of success. We are better educated than ever these days on the physical, psychological, emotional and social differences of children at various stages of their growth. We are also more aware of historical trends that have seen peaks-and-troughs in overall player ability, based on socio-cultural changes around the world. Too much emphasis on games (and tournaments) instead of high-quality training, along with less street-soccer, more sedentary lifestyles for our youth and less technical emphasis in training, has seen the individual creative abilities of players suppressed. Our training environment and the technical demands we place on our players needs to reflect up-to-date methods that maximize the opportunity for the players to develop, first as individuals and second, as teams. For all of our players, regardless of age, technical development should remain a priority. *Hyperlinks* are provided throughout the document that will take you to a separate page, giving examples of various technical areas of coaching, as well as session plans that can be used.

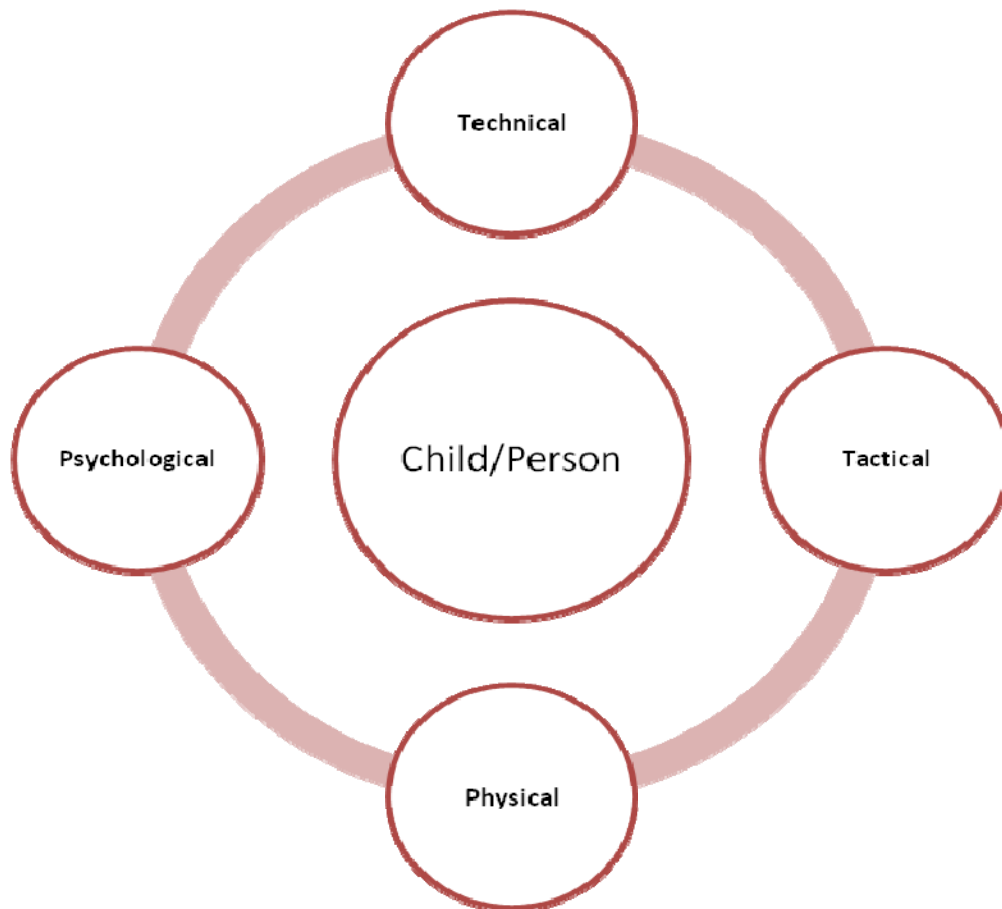
“Everything I know about playing football, I learned playing with my friends – we were always trying to think up a new trick”

Kenny Dalglish

A Child-Centered approach

Loudoun Soccer follows a coaching philosophy that is centered on the child as a person. Regardless of age or level, we must always remember that at the heart of our training environments are children. Children are people first and foremost, and need to be treated as such, so they remain happy, positive and enthused about being part of the game and part of a team. So often, coaches are caught up in the realms of development and especially, winning, and the most important element of teaching – dealing with *PEOPLE* – is forgotten. It should also be noted – and coaches should continue their youth coaching education so they are acutely aware of the fact – that children are not “small-adults”. Players of all ages have special and unique needs based on their age, physical and emotional maturation and their personal background or experiences. Players in Loudoun Soccer will be treated as a person first and a player second.

Loudoun Soccer Child-Centered Model



Technical Terms/Definitions

The Four Pillars of Development

- Technical Training: Developing/executing a pure or isolated individual skill such as *passing, dribbling, receiving, heading, shooting, tackling, catching or diving*
- Tactical Training: Developing decision-making. Decisions such as *when* and *where* to pass are considered tactical training components. More complex tactical training may also include areas such as *Functional Training, Shadow Play, Phase Play and Combination Play*
- Physical Training: Developing the physical attributes of a player through various forms of conditioning. Depending on the players' age, this may include *Muscular Endurance, Muscular Power, Resistance Training and Speed, Agility and Quickness (SAQ) Training*.

Psychological Training: Developing the player's minds to deal with various pressures of the game. Areas of development may include *Confidence Building, Goal-Setting, Dealing with Pressure and Focus/Discipline Training.*

Mental Toughness Training for the Player:

We are teaching players to maximize their performance on demand. Our goal is to teach players to resist fatigue, handle distractions, and regulate emotional turmoil. The ability to control these are the markers of mentally tough players. This is the psychological pillar and you can teach these skills over time. Here are the basics:

- *Mapmaking and goal setting skills.*
- *Performance profiling, a skill to increase awareness and growth for the player.*
- *Identifying and controlling fear.*
- *Maximizing confidence and control in tough situations.*
- *Understanding personal motivation and playing in the zone.*
- *Teaching players attentional /emotional control with coping skills.*
- *Mental skills training, relaxation, concentration and imagery.*
- *Game preparation and re-focusing skills for competition.*

“The Fifth Element”:

A relatively new consideration in coaching is what has become known as ‘The Fifth Element’ or ‘Fifth Pillar’. This is in addition to the above mentioned traditional ‘four pillars’ of Technical, Tactical, Physical and Psychological considerations of development and takes into account the personal situation of each child/player. This includes their home-life, parental influences and stresses (positive and negative), school pressures, emotional issues etc. It should be understood that every child is different and may require an individual approach by the coach, in order to build a relationship with them, ensure they fit appropriately into the team and develop them to their full potential.

You will begin to see more information pertaining to the Fifth Element of Development. The Fifth Element is how we identify and improve social and long term developmental issues within the person's life. The Fifth Element is shaping of attitudes, family system, social support, and global self-confidence. We are all trying to improve performance and critical is the sociology of the whole person. To do this, we all need to understand how players adapt, learn and improve.

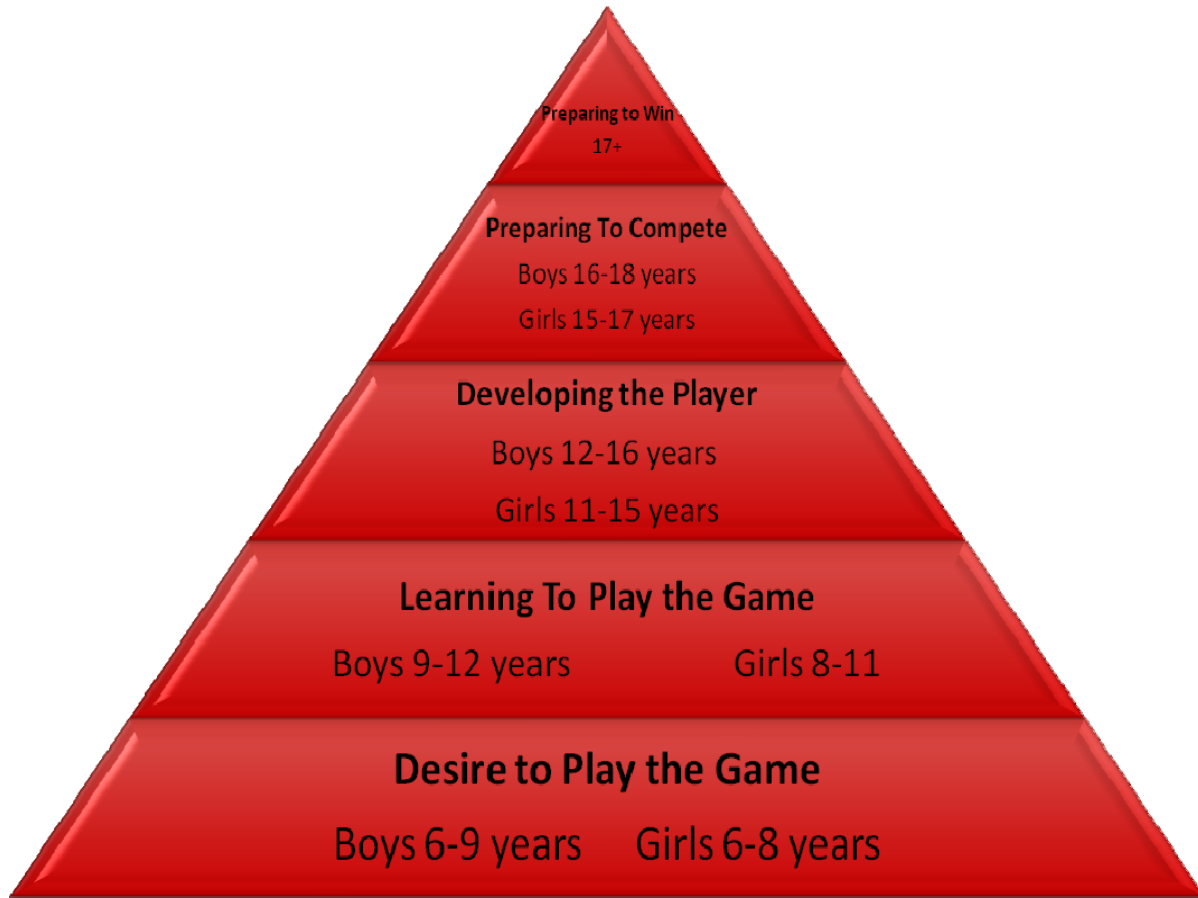
Some Fifth Element considerations:

- *There are individual patterns of recovery and adaptation. Nutrition, Recovery and Restoration.*
- *Attitude and roles within the Workplace, community and larger Family Systems*
- *Effective interpersonal skills: assertiveness, conflict and modeling methods.*
- *Continuing intellectual and personal development through various learning methods*
- *Life skills planning for effective social interaction, communication, leadership and media relations*
- *Energy and stress management skills for financial and community issues.*
- *Increased personal motivation skills and daily growth mapping.*

All Psychological information courtesy of Dr. Dan Freigang, Sports Psychologist. www.drndanfreigang.com

Loudoun Soccer Player Development Pyramid

Loudoun Soccer prides itself on providing somewhere for every player to play. Our club structure provides the correct age-appropriate approach for all players. The Loudoun Soccer Player Development Pyramid is a broad overview of player development goals for various age ranges:



Training Protocol and Coaching Methodologies

Every team in the travel program, regardless of age or ability, should be training three times a week. It is estimated by scientists that an individual must commit approximately 10,000 hours of practice in order to become an expert at that activity (not just soccer). A training program that includes twice-a-week sessions is not adequate to provide the best chance of success for our players. With the lack of 'free-soccer' that children are now playing, three sessions a week should be considered a minimum and the coach must create a training environment that encourages free-play, especially at the younger age groups. This should include a minimum of two sessions as a team and one individual technical training session (e.g. Footskills). It should be noted that older players (U14+) should also be having at least one purely technical session per week.

Coaches should have a commitment to and a philosophy supporting, **technical training** for players of all ages. All training sessions should be progressive and include a warm-up relative to the theme(s) of the session, a technical training phase and a tactical or game-related phase; all of which should be realistic, competitive and meet the demands of the game. In addition, players of all ages should be spending at least 15 minutes of the warm-up with a ball each to develop individual comfort with the ball. In addition, all sessions, with the exception of defending topics, should include passing and receiving exercises to develop high quality passing with a good first-touch. **Tactical training** should be broken down into individual, small group and team tactics and worked on in quantity and frequency relative to the age of the players. Younger players (U9-U12) should be working primarily on individual tactics (1v1 and 1v2) and small group tactics (2v2-4v4 and numbers up/down attacking and defending). Players in the U13-U15 age groups should also be working on 6v6-8v8 team tactics, including numbers up/down. Senior players in the U16-U19 age groups should be working on all of the above, as well as 8v8/9v9, 11v9 and 11v11 training, including **shadow play** training. Shadow Play may be used with the U11-U15 age groups to highlight a certain tactical situation, such as **patterns of play**, but time spent in these situations should be significantly reduced (5-10 minutes max.), as players will become bored with the lack of activity/movement.

Conditioning, functional play and psychological training should be addressed based on the ages of the players. **Conditioning** should be performed wherever possible, as a tool to develop the fitness of the player. For U9-U10 players, no conditioning should be done and coaches should invest their time in developing the players technically. However, foot speed and agility exercises are encouraged in some small quantity and duration. For U11-U12 players, SAQ training should be introduced and the coach should make an effort to condition the players with the ball as much as possible. U13-U19 players may perform some conditioning without the ball, but this should be kept to a minimum and should be specific (e.g. Speed, Agility and Quickness work or paced aerobic conditioning). Every effort should be made to use conditioning as a tool for improving the team and not as a punishment. The team should develop a mentality where conditioning is recognized as a necessary and positive part of their training to improve the team. **Disruptive players** should be dealt with in a positive and educational manner, which may include the involvement of the parents and the Director of Coaching if a problem persists. **Functional play** is developing a player or group of players in a certain area of the field. This can be introduced and encouraged in a basic form at U9-U12 (e.g. giving a defender passing options), but should be formally incorporated at U13. The coach must recognize that child psychology and **psychological training** are crucial parts of developing players. However, the coach must also recognize their limitations and must keep the training simple and within the realms of soccer. For example, confidence building and creating a positive environment for the player, where he or she can work through any technical issues to become a better and happier player would be primary focus areas. Areas of developing players psychologically may also include confidence building exercises, positive reinforcement, and goal-setting and leadership activities. An educated coach will always recognize that psychology is taking place any time they are around or interacting with players and some of the best opportunities to impact a player mentally may be off the field or in a passing (positive) comment.

Coaches should make an effort in all sessions to coach less and allow the players to solve problems on their own. Problem solving, risk-taking and **'guided-discovery'** learning are strongly encouraged for all age groups, but especially at U9-U12 (including formal games). Short phases of practice (10-15 min.) where the coach has no involvement other than

supervision, observation and occasional individual interaction with a player, are encouraged. Scrimmaging in the last 20 minutes of a practice is a good time to take this approach. However, the coach must work to understand the balance between coaching and observing and should make corrections/interventions at appropriate times. **Transition** should also be taught in all sessions, so players are gaining an understanding of the importance of possession-changes on both sides of the ball. While it should be introduced and encouraged in a basic form at U9-U10, it should be taught at U11 and formally incorporated, tactically, at U13. However, its importance to the game should be highly stressed to players at all ages. **Coaching in the Game** methodology is also encouraged, particularly for the U13 and above players, as we strive to allow the players to play more and be 'drilled' less. This still requires a coaching topic(s), structure and interaction with the players, but all coaching is done in a game environment (e.g. 6v6/8v8). 'Triggers' or start-points are used to place players in a scenario where they are forced to practice the chosen topic. An example practice topic would be 'long-passing', where the play begins with a trigger/start-point of the full-back receiving the ball from the GK and driving a long ball to the striker.

The most important aspects of all training are that it should be dynamic and **game-related**. *Coaches must create realistic, competitive environments for the players to develop in.* When working on technical topics there should be some non-pressured repetition, but the majority of the session should be designed to create situations that the players will face in a game i.e. with progressive pressure/defenders. This will help develop players' technical and decision-making abilities. In all practices, line-drills that involve players standing around for long periods are strongly discouraged. If, for example, the training session is 2v2 or 3v3, then several groups should be practicing at once to maximize participation by the whole group. In addition, all topics should eventually "go-to-goal" wherever possible. Topics such as passing/receiving and dribbling should be taught with an emphasis on being positive and ultimately going to goal/scoring. This can be done in a variety of ways but introducing direction and playing with numbers up/down is strongly encouraged.

Repetition

Repeating topics and performing multiple repetitions of each technique should be a training priority for all coaches/trainers. All topics should be repeated for two weeks, with some degree of progression. This will give four to six sessions on each newly learned topic. In addition, each activity within the training sessions should have significant repetition of the chosen exercise or technique; e.g. receiving, goal scoring etc.

Positional Rotations

For the U9 and U10 age groups, ALL players must play every position throughout the season on a regular basis, including goalkeeper. The coach should instill a standard alphabetical rotation order for goalkeepers. This rotation should be firmly adhered to, regardless of the opposition or tournament, to ensure all players are exposed to the GK position. The coach should take a positive approach to all aspects of U9-U11 goalkeeping, including responding to mistakes. In addition, the coach must educate the parents on the dynamics of goalkeeping and its importance to the team as a specialized position, as well as the important psychological aspects of playing this position. While players may be identified as stronger or weaker in certain positions in the field, the coach must make every effort to rotate players in all positions through the team.

Gender

A standard development model will be followed in this curriculum, with no adjustments based on gender. However, there are some notable differences in the way the game is played for each gender, particularly beyond the ages of U12. It is the coaches' responsibility to plan and adjust their sessions accordingly so the topics being taught are within the reality of the game for each gender. Some of the more notable differences in the girls game vs. the boys are the physical strength differences and the technical ability (consistent with strength) to deliver longer passes through the field. Therefore, a topic such as switching the point of attack, for example, may need to be adjusted in the girls' game, as opposed to the boys' who, as they develop through adolescence, may be able to hit a longer, more direct pass to switch the play (this example also has relevance to the style and formation of defending a coach may choose for boys or girls, as they will be more vulnerable on the weak side to the counter-attack in the boys game, due to the ability to play longer and quicker). Also, as players mature through their teens, there are many differences in the emotional responses between boys and girls and the coach should tailor their approach appropriately, based in particular, on the individual child. This may be especially important in our 'fifth element' considerations regarding areas such as Individual Player Management and Relationship building.

Off-Season Training Considerations

Loudoun Soccer travel program is a year-round program and all travel teams are strongly encouraged to train in the off-seasons. Training opportunities are provided by the club during summer and winter months and coaches are expected to have team and individual training opportunities alongside the club options. Off-season training is an ideal time to work on areas you do not always have the opportunity to address during the season. Additional conditioning, longer technical work and small-sided games are examples of areas that can be addressed during these times. This curriculum is structured to assist coaches in the planning of their sessions throughout the competitive seasons (fall and spring). Sessions and topics may be repeated in the off-season, but coaches should adjust their sessions based on the training environment (size of playing area, weather etc). The technical staff is available to all coaches in helping plan off-season training.

What this curriculum is NOT designed for

Most importantly, this curriculum is not designed as a coaching manual. This is an overview and a guide towards *Key Training Priorities*, identified as primary areas of focus for training our players at each age group. It is also not designed to tell the coaches what exercises, activities and drills to utilize within each topic or how long to spend on each activity. In addition it is not designed to influence coach's personality or coaching styles. Coaches in the Loudoun Soccer travel program are selected to represent the club based on their ability, character and personality to work with our youth and the technical staff trusts that the coaches will execute their training sessions to a high standard. There are thousands of activities that can be used to train players in all areas of the game. Coaches are free to implement whatever age, ability and ethically-appropriate activities they wish while following this curriculum, in order to get the most out of their players. Coaches are expected to be motivating and positive towards their players but personalities and coaching styles will vary.

'Yes, that's my philosophy. Motivation is the most important thing. Some of them can and they don't want, some of them want and they can't. We want players who can do it and at the same time want to do it.

Jose Mourinho

What this curriculum does NOT contain

- ✚ Set-Plays
- ✚ Specific Conditioning
- ✚ Injury-prevention exercises
- ✚ Sports Psychology exercises/activities
- ✚ Nutrition for soccer

The technical staff is available to assist coaches in any of these areas and coaches are encouraged to do their own research and education in these areas of the game in order to enhance their knowledge and teaching abilities of these topics.

Coaching Education

ALL Loudoun Soccer Coaches are expected to follow a continuous path of coaching education to improve their knowledge and experience. US Soccer and the NSCAA offer various local and national level courses and coaches are expected to pursue these opportunities on an annual basis. A variety of international coaching education opportunities can be obtained either overseas or here in the U.S. and coaches are also encouraged to get an international experience of development. In addition, all coaches must attend the mandatory coach's clinics provided by the club. Further information on local and national coaching education opportunities can be found at:

VA Youth Soccer Association

www.vysa.com

US Soccer Federation

www.ussoccer.com

NSCAA

www.nscaa.com

OVERVIEW OF TRAVEL TRAINING CURRICULUM

All travel coaches must follow the training guidelines provided by the club within this curriculum, so all **Key Training Priorities** are identified and developed. An overview of all areas to be covered by age is outlined below and the full comprehensive seasonal training outline is provided in a separate document. U9-U12 teams must follow the club weekly training schedule provided and should plan each session during their season as a whole, addressing the Key Training Priorities outlined for that age group. Individual or Team deficiencies that are observed during games should be secondary to the seasonal plans that are part of the bigger developmental picture. U13-U19 coaches have more freedom to develop the tactical side of their teams and address coach-identified priority areas on a weekly basis. However, coaches in these age groups must still be focusing on technical development, as well as addressing all Key Training Priorities outlined in the curriculum over the course of each season.



LOUDOUN SOCCER

U9-U10

Training Priority:

Technical Development / Individual Motor Control

Recommended System of Play:

2-3-1 - Encourages attacking play with wide players having freedom to get forward. Allows for pressure and cover defensively

Technical

Dribbling; Passing; Receiving; Shooting; Tackling (block/poke); Investment in non-dominant foot with every technique

Goalkeeping: Positioning, posture, handling, diving and 1v1

Tactical

Team formations/shape at 7v7; playing away from pressure; decision making in 1v1-2v2 Attacking and Defending

Physical

No conditioning; encourage aggressive and competitive play; introduce and develop a team warm-up

Psychological

Developing a fun but focused and competitive environment that builds confidence and encourages risk-taking and creativity; develop confidence to communicate with team mates

Notes:

FUN, FUN, FUN / COMPETITIVE / DISCIPLINED!! Players at this age will only be aware of themselves and *maybe*, a team mate. Team concepts will be difficult to understand at this age. All coaching should be geared towards the individual in technical activities and tactically in 1v1 and 2v2 situations. Players are not accountable at this age. All positions rotated



LOUDOUN SOCCER

U11-U12

Training Priority:

Technical Development / Small Group Tactics / SAQ Conditioning

Recommended System of Play:

2-3-2 - Encourages attacking play from wide players and allows for combination play from strikers. Allows for pressure and cover defensively

Technical

Dribbling, Passing (static/on the move), Receiving (static/on the move), Shooting, Tackling (block/poke/slide); Investment in non-dominant foot with every technique

Goalkeeper: Extension dives/varied height dives/distribution/deal with back pass; Technique before speed

Tactical

Team Formations and Shape at 8v8; Increase Speed of Play; Greater decision-making in small-group activities and numbers up/down; Attacking and Defending Shape

Physical

Speed, Agility and Quickness (SAQ); increased aerobic and anaerobic fitness

Psychological

Developing a fun but focused and competitive environment that builds confidence and encourages risk-taking and creativity; develop ability to appropriately and effectively communicate with team mates

Notes:

FUN, FUN / COMPETITIVE / DISCIPLINED!

Players at this age will begin to develop a greater ability to process more complex numbers and situations. However the numbers should not be increased too much and the element of fun in the practice should still be a key priority for the coach. Small group situations such as 3v3-6v6 can be expanded to include numbers up and down situations and coaching in the thirds of the field can be introduced. Again however, simple pictures in each third should be presented and the players should be given *options* more than rigid instructions on patterns of play. Full team concepts will still remain difficult to understand and the coaches should avoid trying to coach 'the big picture'. Positions rotated appropriately



LOUDOUN SOCCER

U13-U14

Training Priority:

Technical Development / Tactical Training in thirds of the field / Increased physical and mental demands

Recommended Systems of Play: Depends on players available, gender of team and level of play

Technical

Ball Manipulation; Increased range/texture of passing, Increased Speed of Play, Team offensive and defensive responsibilities; mature level of physical and mental competence; Investment in non-dominant foot with every technique

Goalkeeper: Established position now: Intermediate level footwork and diving; reaction and second saves; angles; ability to deal with more complex crosses; greater ability to deal with back pass under pressure; conditioning

Tactical

Increased level of tactical demands, including unit shape in each third of the field as well as basic team shape in attacking and defending situations

Physical

Players should be being challenged physically and should have an awareness of how to use their (more coordinated and developed) body appropriately in competitive situations. Players should be receiving game and position-specific conditioning on a weekly basis. Players may be on a low-level resistance training program, depending on their physical maturation.

Psychological

Emotions are high for both genders and should be managed; training environment should be very competitive, but still enjoyable and fun; greater expectation of mental toughness; identify leaders and give them additional responsibility

Notes:

FUN / COMPETITIVE / DISCIPLINED! Players at this level can now begin to process the bigger picture, but are still learning various increased demands of the game on all levels (technical, tactical, physical, and psychological). The coach must tailor his/her approach to the individual as the tactical demands become more complex. The coach should be especially aware at this age of the varying emotional needs of players of both genders. On the female side of the game, social interaction now starts to carry greater importance. Team cohesion and morale is now a greater consideration for the coach of both genders. Positions narrowed to a focus of two/three, based on individual strengths.



LOUDOUN SOCCER

U15-U16

Training Priority:

Tactical Training linking thirds of the field / High-level of physical fitness / Strong mental capacity / Desire to compete / Technical Development

Recommended Systems of Play: Depends on players available, gender of team and level of play

Technical

Increased speed of play; increased ability to deliver quality passes over greater distance; Investment in non-dominant foot with every technique

Goalkeeper: Advanced footwork and diving ability; good physical presence; excellent communication; first attacker

Tactical

Function as a series of units in a team and have the ability to effectively link the units together

Physical

High-level of physical fitness that includes resistance training and speed, agility and quickness programs. Ability to apply aggression, strength and speed in a controlled manner in game situations

Psychological

Strong desire to compete and win; ability to prepare for competition; mature leadership

Notes:

DISCIPLINED / COMPETITIVE / FUN! The team must be disciplined by this point. While the technical and tactical requirements for the U15 and U16 players are very similar, a significant difference in speed of play, as well as self-esteem, belief and overall confidence may be observed, in just one year, due to physical maturation. This is especially noticeable on the boy's side of the game. Inconsistencies may be observed from player to player regarding accountability - they are often mentally stronger but still have a lot of immature tendencies/emotions; require a strong leader and mentor



LOUDOUN SOCCER

U17- U19

Training Priority:

Tactical Training linking thirds of the field / High-level of physical fitness / Strong mental capacity / Desire to compete / Technical Development

Recommended Systems of Play: Depends on players available, gender of team and level of play

Technical

Refine and further develop all areas of technical execution; Investment in non-dominant foot with every technique

Goalkeeper: Advanced technical, tactical and physical abilities; strong mentally with good physical presence; excellent communication; first attacker

Tactical

Understanding of advanced tactics, including acute angles and distance of support/pressure, transitional shape and set plays; ability to switch systems/roles during play

Physical

Intense, appropriate and continued resistance training program at least three times a week;

Psychological

Good training attitude and work-ethic; goal-setting plan (long/short); use of mental imagery/visualization

Notes:

DISCIPLINED / COMPETITIVE / FUN! Players still not fully formed physically, emotionally or technically. A greater commitment to training and playing at a good level is now required so clear decisions can be made about college play and beyond. Players are now at an age/level where the game itself will hold them accountable for their performance – it is much more likely that mistakes will be punished.

If you have questions, ideas or suggestions on how we may further improve this curriculum, please email Director of Coaching for Travel, Dave Edwards, at coachedu@loudounsoccer.com