

# **Player Development Guidelines**

## **Milton Youth Soccer Club**

### **Youth Players U5-U19**

Player development guidelines have been established and adapted from the Ontario Soccer Association (OSA) and the Canadian Soccer Association (CSA).

The purposes of these guidelines are to provide coaches with:

- A long-term plan for player development for youth players U5-U19
- A baseline of expectations at each age group for coaches to organize their training around
- A club-wide plan that addresses player development in a stage by stage basis

*It is important to note that each player and team is different. Players develop at different rates and times. Before the below guidelines are applied, first the individual player and team must be evaluated to determine a starting spot.*

In organizing all training sessions, the below principles should apply to each training session (*CSA Coaching Education*):

1. Activities are developmentally appropriate
2. Coaches provide clear, concise, and correct information
3. Instruction is organized to move from simple to complex
4. A safe and appropriate training space is utilized
5. Decision making by players is required with activities
6. Activities have implications towards the game

# U4-U5: ACTIVE START

## **Ages Group Considerations:**

The fascination for the ball, the desire to master it and the thrill of scoring goals provides the launching pad. The joy and pleasure of the game are best nurtured by encouraging freedom of expression and organizing children's play in small groups. The activities are best nurtured by allowing freedom of expression within small group situations. The "Four Corner" approach places the player at the center of the development process with soccer experiences that meet the four key needs of the player; Technical/Tactical, Social/Emotional, Physical, Mental (LTPD)

**Coach:** Facilitator, Friendly Helper; Organizer; Stimulator; Patient; Enthusiastic; Imaginative

**Recommended CSA Coaching Education:** LTPD U4/U5 Active Start + MED & RiS (3.5 hours)

## **Technique/Tactics: Learning through FUN games and age appropriate activities.**

Activities should be:

- Fun
- Appropriate for the Age
- Promote Decision Making
- Encourage Creativity
- Participation of All Players with a ball

**Games:** Body Awareness => Maze Games => Target Games

## **Skills to Master:**

**Dribbling:** All surfaces/Attacking Moves/Turns/Change of Speed/Change of Directions

**Receiving:** Ground Balls/Move Feet to Meet the Ball/Control with All Surfaces of Foot/Cushion/ Air Balls-Self-Served

**Passing:** Proper technique with Inside/Laces/Outside/From the Dribble/Weight of Pass

## **Physical: Physical Movement Education through Soccer**

Body Awareness

Balance

Coordination - Eye Hand and Eye Foot

Agility - Changing Direction while in Motion

## **Psychological: Keep it FUN and ENJOYABLE to Foster a Desire to Play.**

- Tend to one task at a time - controlling the Ball is a Complex Task (Realistic Expectations)
- Does not understand group or collective play - Individual Activities (All Players with a Ball)
- Short attention span unless peaked - Keep Interest High
- Like to show what they can do - Encourage to Try New Things
- Develop Self Esteem - Activities that Foster Positive Feedback and Attainable Positive Success

*\* At the earlier ages, winning is not the primary emphasis of our program. At these ages individual skill development is much more important. CSA believes taking the short track to winning at the*

*early ages may win games, but cheats players in their long term development. By stressing individual development, we will produce technically proficient players who can later be taught tactics.*

# U6-U8: FUNDAMENTALS

## **Ages Group Considerations:**

The motivation to learn basic skills is very high at this age level. Children gradually begin to change from being self-centered to being self-critical and develop the need for group and/or team games. The game itself should be central to all skills training. Eleven-a-side soccer is too sophisticated and complicated for young players - small sided games, which provide the right amount of pressure for the child's level of development, are more appropriate. (LTPD)

**Coach:** Sensitive Teacher; Patient; Enthusiastic; Imaginative; Ability to Demonstrate; Understanding of Technique; Preferably Young

**Recommended CSA Coaching Education:** LTPD Fundamentals (7 hours) and MED + RiS

## **Skills to Master:**

**Dribbling:** All surfaces/Attacking Moves/Turns/Change of Speed/Change of Directions

**Receiving:** Body behind the ball/Cushion Ball/Control with All Surfaces of Foot/Air Balls from Self-Service

**Passing:** Proper technique with Inside/Laces/Outside/From the Dribble/Weight of Pass

**Shooting:** Body Facing Target/Position of Plant Foot/Ankle Locked/Follow Through/Striking off the Dribble

**Heading:** Introduce/Build Confidence/Soft Ball/Proper Technique

\*Repeat skills in a variety of exercises and games where kids are always active.

## **Tactics:**

Attacking: Control, Possess, Attack

**1 vs. 1:** attacking first touch/unbalance defender/beat with move/change of speed

**2 vs. 1:** Spacing/Angles/Commit Defender/Recognize Situation/Advance/ Combine with 1-2 (give and go)

**3 vs. 1:** Spacing/Angles/Commit Defender/Attack quickly

\*Attack quickly, don't let the ball slow down or stop moving

Defending: Pressure/Cover/Balance

**1 vs. 1:** Immediate Pressure /Goal Side/Keep in Front/Delay/Win Ball

**1 vs. 2:** Immediate Pressure /Keep in Front/Delay/Support Behind/Depth

\*Get immediate pressure but move your feet and stay in front of the attacker

## **Physical: All Fitness with the Ball**

- Coordination
- Balance
- Agility- Changing direction while in motion

**Psychological:** Keep it FUN and ENJOYABLE to Foster a Desire to Play

Demonstrate Increased Self-Responsibility - Give Responsibility for Preparation; Discipline

Can Initiate Play - Let it Happen - Learn through Self-Discovery/Self-Expression

Enjoy Competition - All Activities Should have Objectives/Method of Scoring

Can work in Groups - Cooperative Games and Activities

**Practice Set-up: U6-8 between games and practice 30-45 min & U9 45-70min**

- **Warm-up:** Ball Control/Dribbling/Tag Activities (10 minutes)
- **Skill Work:** Introduce or Review Topics (10 minutes)
- **Tactics:** 1v1, 2v2, ect. or partner/group passing activities (15 minutes)
- **Game:** **U6** 3v3 (no GK) **U7** 4v4 (no GK) or 5v5 (with GK) (10 to 15 minutes)

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# U9-U12: LEARN TO TRAIN

## Ages Group Considerations:

This is the “*Golden Age of Learning*” The coach’s role becomes even more important as he or she becomes one of the player’s role models, along with famous players and teams. At these ages players want to learn creative skills. Skill demonstration from the coach is very important as the players learn best by doing. Players are now moving from self-centered to self-critical, and they have a high stimulation level during basic skills training. This is an important time to teach basic principles of play and to establish training ethics and discipline. Repetitions in training are important to developing technical excellence, but creating a fun and challenging environment is still essential for stimulating learning. (LTPD)

**Coach:** Sensitive Teacher; Enthusiastic; Possess Soccer Awareness; Ability to Demonstrate; Knowledge of the Key Factors of Basic Skills; Give Encouragement; Preferably Young

**Recommended CSA Coaching Education:** LTPD Learn To Train (14 hours) and MED +RiS

## Skills to Master:

**Dribbling:** Encourage Attacking/Variety of Turns and Moves to Beat a Defender/Shielding/Change of Speed and Direction

**Receiving:** Ground and Air Balls/All Surfaces of Foot and Body from partner of the move

**Passing:** Proper technique with Inside/Laces/Outside/Short to Long/Crossing

**Shooting:** Body Facing Target/Position of Plant Foot/Ankle Locked/Follow Through/Striking off the Dribble

**Heading:** Proper Technique/Partner Serve/Jumping to Head/Redirecting Ball/Partner Juggling

\*Add pressure through time, space, and defenders to push players to execute skills at a high level.

## Tactics:

**Individual Attackers:** Attacking First Touch/Unbalance Defender/Take Risks in the Appropriate Part of the Field/Do at Speed

Small Group Attacking: 2v1, 2v2, 3v1, 3v2, 3v3/Spacing/Angles/Commit Defender/Possess/Combine (wall pass/overlaps, takeovers, double pass)

**Individual Defenders:** Immediate Pressure/Goal Side/Keep in Front/Delay/Redirect

**Small Group Defending:** 2v1, 2v2, 3v1, 3v2, 3v3/Pressure/Cover Behind/ Balance /Depth/1st Defender/2nd Defender/3rd Defender

**\*A Great Deal of Coaching/Teaching within 4v4 Games**

## Physical: All Fitness Work with the Ball

- Agility - Coordination on the Ball
- Speed
- Strength
- Endurance

## Psychological: Keep it FUN and ENJOYABLE to Foster a Desire to Play

- Encourage Decision Making
- Imagination/Creativity
- Increase Demands

- Discipline
- Encourage to watch high level soccer

# U13-U16: TRAINING TO TRAIN

## **Ages Group Considerations:**

At this stage, elite soccer groups express interest in recruiting talented youth players. Care must be taken to recognize and protect the long-term interest of each player. Risks and issues can be avoided by ensuring that the development model remains “player centered” The optimal window of trainability for stamina begins with the onset of Peak Height Velocity (PHV), more commonly known as the adolescent growth spurt. The demands of skill training as well as training loads should increase, thus provoking improvement in mental toughness, concentration and diligence. Awareness of tactics within the game becomes an important facet of the learning process. Players tend to be self-critical and rebellious, but they have a strong commitment to the team.

**Coach:** Strong Personality; Soccer Knowledgeable; Enthusiastic

**Recommended CSA Coaching Education:** Provincial B, CSA B Preparatory license, National B and A License.

## **Skills U13-U14**

**Dribbling:** Encourage Attacking/Variety of Turns and Moves to Beat a Defender/Shielding/Change of Speed and Direction

**Receiving:** Vision before receiving/quality first touch/ Ground and air balls/All surfaces of foot and body, on the run

**Passing:** Short to Long/Bent/Driven/Chipped/Crossing/All on the Run

**Shooting:** Vision/On the Move/From Turns/Volleys

**Heading:** Attack the Ball/Judge the Ball/ to goal (down)/ to Clear (up and out)

\*Work on skills through game like activities where players are pressed to perform at a high speed.

## **Tactics: Increase Tactical Speed (Decision Making)**

**Individual Attackers:** Attacking First Touch/Unbalance Defender/Take Risks in the Appropriate Part of the Field/Do at Speed

**Individual Defending:** Angle and distance of cover. Delaying and pressuring as a group

**Small Group Attacking:** 2v1, 2v2, 3v1, 3v2, 3v3, 4v4

Spacing/Angles off the Ball/Recognize when to Attack and when to Possess/Play Simple (the way you face)/Keep the Ball Moving (1-2 touches/Move off the ball as it travels from one person to the next/Combine (wall pass/overlaps, takeovers, double pass)

**Small Group Defending:** 2v1, 2v2, 3v1, 3v2, 3v3

Pressure as a Group/Cover Behind/ Balance /Depth/Compactness/1<sup>st</sup> Defender/Mental Toughness to be Patience and Disciplined/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Defender/3<sup>rd</sup> Defender/Communication

## **Team Attacking:**

- Keep possession
- Play away from pressure
- Movement of players within the team shape
- Encourage risk taking in the attacking third

## **Team Defending:**

- Maintain good defensive shape
- Zonal concepts. Recognize when to delay or step
- Maintain good pressure and cover throughout all areas of the field.

**\*A Great Deal of Coaching/Teaching within 4 v 4 Games**

**Physical: All Fitness Work with the Ball**

- Flexibility- Dynamic stretching
- Agility - Coordination on the Ball
- Strength
- Endurance

**Psychological: The Game Should Remain Fun and Enjoyable. Players Should Have a Passion for the Game!**

- Imagination/Creativity
- Increase Demands
- Establish Training Targets
- Maintain Discipline
- Encourage to Watch High Level Soccer

**Skills U15-U16:** Players should have all basic skills mastered and now be pressed to perform them at a high speed, under pressure, and with cleanliness. Technical work should be worked on in game like activities where the appropriate amount of pressure is applied. With too little pressure players are bored and with too much they are frustrated. Play with the size of the playing space and number of defenders to find the appropriate amount of pressure.

- Individual Skill Covered during the Warm-Up
- Increase Technical Speed
- Strike Balls Cleanly over Distance with Accuracy under Pressure

**Tactics: Increase decision making and speed of play.**

**Individual: Decisions based on the thirds of the field.**

**Attacking:**

- Recognition of where a player is at on the field and the appropriate “risk taking” a player can make in that position. Knowing a player’s role and responsibility within the big picture of the team.

**Defending:**

- Recognizing how quality pressure on the ball effects team defending.
- Being able to read the game to take away the appropriate options from attackers.
- **Small Group: 3v3, 4v4, 5v5, 7v7**

**Attacking:**

- Recognize when to Attack and when to Possess
- Move off the ball as it travels from one person to the next
- Immediate Support off the Ball
- Stretch the Field off the Ball with Width and Depth
- Play Simple (the way you face)
- Work Combinations: wall pass, overlaps, takeovers, double pass, ect.
- Crossing: picking out a running rather than just putting it in the box

- Set plays

**Defending:**

- Compactness
- Cover, Balance, Depth
- Communication: Who, What, When, Where
- Group/Mental Toughness to be Patient and Disciplined
- Pressure and Win the ball as a group
- Zonal Defending Concepts

**Team: Clearly defined tactics**

**Attacking:**

- Decisions based on the thirds of the field
- Sustain possession for the correct moment in the correct area
- Maintaining team shape moving off the ball to unbalance the opponent

**Defending:**

- Pressure based on support behind the ball
- Understanding of zonal and man marking principles
- Delaying attackers until support behind the ball arrives

**\* A Great Deal of Coaching/Teaching within 7v7 Games**

**Physical: Fitness Work With and Without the Ball**

- Flexibility - Dynamic stretching before playing and static stretching after playing
- Agility - With and Without the Ball
- Endurance - Aerobic and Anaerobic
- Strength - Upper and Lower Body
- Nutrition - Proper Diet: Pre-Game, Post-Game, Tournaments, etc.
- Prevention and Care of Injuries

**Psychological:**

- Increased Concentration
- Leadership/Player Responsibilities
- Discipline
- Respect for the Game
- Goal Setting
- Vary Program - Satisfy Player's Urge for Competition
- Encourage to watch high level soccer

# U16-U19: TRAINING TO COMPETE

## **Ages Group Considerations:**

Athletes who are now proficient at performing basic and soccer-specific skills are working to gain more game maturity as they learn to perform these skills under a variety of competitive conditions. Fulfillment of each player's potential depends on their own efforts, the support of teammates, and the unselfish guidance of the coach. They must be exposed to quality playing and training environments which extend their mental, physical, tactical and technical capabilities to their limit. Players must have a sound understanding of soccer principles and concepts, and they should show

**Coach:** Charismatic, Well Informed; Up to Date; Experienced; Knowledgeable; Articulate; Disciplinarian – No Doubts about His/hers Authority; Managerial Know How

**Recommended CSA Coaching Education:** CSA National B and A License

**Skills:** Players should have all basic skills mastered and now be pressed to perform them at a high speed, under pressure, and with cleanliness. Technical work should be worked on in game like activities where the appropriate amount of pressure is applied. With too little pressure players are bored. Play with the size of the playing space and number of defenders to find the appropriate amount of pressure. Demand a high pace of play and accuracy on the ball.

**Tactics: Increase Tactical Speed (Decision Making) Under Increased Pressure**

### ***Individual:***

#### **Attacking:**

- Recognition of where a player is at on the field and the appropriate "risk taking" a player can make in that position.
- Confidence to hold possession and solve problems as an individual
- Knowing a player's role and responsibility within the big picture of the team.

#### **Defending:**

- Recognizing how quality pressure on the ball effects team defending.
- Being able to read the game to take away the appropriate options from attackers.

### ***Small Group:***

#### **Attacking:**

- Possession with a Purpose
- Combination play with tactical implications
- Penetration with creativity
- Counter Attacking
- Crossing with proper runs in the box
- Set plays

#### **Defending:**

- Compactness
- Cover, Balance, Depth
- Recognition of double team opportunities
- Communication: Who, What, When, Where
- Group/Mental Toughness to be Patient and Disciplined
- Controlling the speed and direction of the game with defensive decisions

**Team: Understanding of Lines and Linkage**

- Attacking:
- Decisions based on the thirds of the field
- Penetration with creativity and movement off the ball
- Maintaining team shape moving off the ball to unbalance the opponent
- Defending:
- Pressure based on support behind the ball
- Understanding of zonal and man marking principles
- Delaying attackers until support behind the ball arrives

**\* A Great Deal of Coaching/Teaching within 8v8 and 11v11 Games**

**Physical: Fitness Work With and Without the Ball**

- Flexibility - Dynamic stretching before playing and static stretching after playing
- Agility - With and Without the Ball
- Endurance - Aerobic and Anaerobic
- Strength - Upper and Lower Body
- Nutrition - Proper Diet: Pre-Game, Post-Game, Tournaments, etc.
- Prevention and Care of Injuries

**Psychological:**

- Increased Concentration
- Leadership/Player Responsibilities
- Discipline
- Respect for the Game
- Self Confidence/Self-Motivation-Goal Setting
- Vary Program - Satisfy Player's Urge for Competition
- Will to Win
- Encourage to Watch High Level Soccer

# U19+: TRAINING TO WIN

## **Ages Group Considerations:**

The majority, if not all, of the player's physical, technical, tactical, and psychological qualities are now fully established, and the focus of training has shifted to optimization of performance. They may still require additional tactical experience in high-pressure games to develop consistency. The focus is on the maximization of all capacities.

**Coach:** This group is high performance, National team coaches, and semi-pro and professional team coaches.

**Recommended CSA Coaching Education:** CSA National B and A License

**Skills:** Players should have all basic skills mastered and now be pressed to perform them at a high speed, under pressure, and with cleanliness. Technical work should be worked on in game like activities where the appropriate amount of pressure is applied. With too little pressure players are bored. Play with the size of the playing space and number of defenders to find the appropriate amount of pressure. Demand a high pace of play and accuracy on the ball.

- **Physical** – Individual fitness program for maintenance, improvement; work and recovery must be well monitored; periodization is critical.
- **Technical** – Further development of advanced techniques and skills; refinement of general skills and individual positional skills; game-related technical repetition under pressure.
- **Tactical** – High degree of decision making, leadership and game analysis skills; ability to adjust game plan and adapt playing strategies to suit changing demands.
- **Mental** – Increased concentration and responsibility, leadership, discipline, accountability, goal setting, self-confidence, self-motivation, will to win, mental toughness, competitive mentality