



# Player Development

## Amazon Grimstad Fotballakademi

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# 2014

## The Pillars

The development curriculum is created as player-centered guidelines for clubs, administration, coaches and parents to understand expectations by age and to improve the training and match environment for our youth players. Ultimately, we will better prepare and provide future opportunities for our players to advance and succeed on and off the field.

Each segment of the development curriculum is to help the clubs and coaches to better understand themes and topics to focus on at different ages and milestones in the player development pathway. Each player is unique, but fundamental skills and demands have a natural curve and it is our responsibility as coaches to lead the players in a progressive manner.

The four pillars we will focus on are technical, tactical, physical and psychosocial:

- **Technical:** Individual player's proficiency for ball control and general mobility without the ball. For example, dribbling and turning, passing and receiving, shooting, 1v1 defending and attacking, heading, shot stopping and blocking or ball handling, etc. for goalkeepers.
- **Tactical:** Individual or collective group actions performed by a player or a unit of players to take advantage of or expose the opponent. For example, the team attacking philosophy could be based on the counter-attack; building possession out from the back or the team defending philosophy could be high press or retreat and recovery for low pressure. Support play and controlling the tempo of the match, etc. for goalkeepers.
- **Physical:** Individual player's proficiency in strength, endurance, speed, mobility, coordination and balance, agility, perception and awareness. This is a combination of basic genetic ability and motor skills and learned technique. For example, players can be evaluated on aerobic capacity, aerobic power, reaction, acceleration or change of direction speed.
- **Psychosocial:** This can be evaluated both for the individual player and team cooperation. Basic player motivation and self-confidence is often evident in a player's ability to work without being asked and also in the player's willingness to learn. The more advanced evaluation is evident in competitive attitude, concentration, self-control and commitment to the task at hand and the team throughout the season. Socially, a player's ability to communicate on and off the field will confirm their respect and discipline for the team and the sport.
  - The psychological aspect of the sport must be at the forefront. As coaches, player management is important at all levels and ages. A combination of "toughness" with a positive attitude from the coach can affect a player's performance and commitment. Constant communication and feedback is critical between the coach and player.

## Expectations by Age

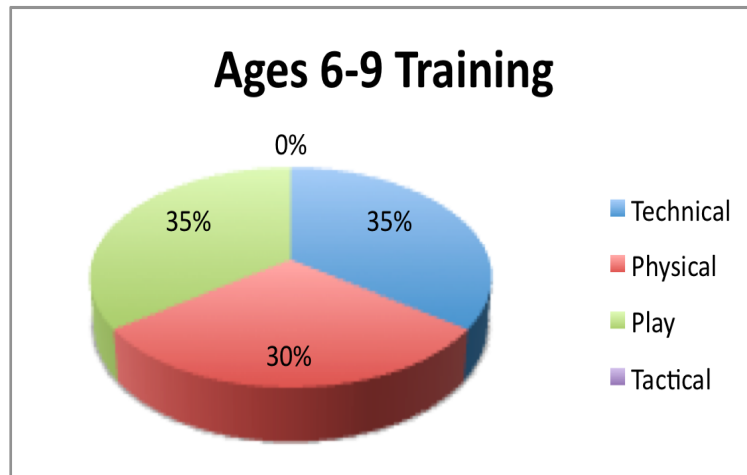
A child's development path can be enhanced with sport. At a young age, sport can teach children basic motor-development skills and positive "can-do" attitudes, which will inevitably affect other areas of their lives. For youth coaches, it is critical to have a basic understanding of which fundamental skills to demand because we are asking children not only to perform physically, but also with intelligence.

As the player matures, so do the expectations. As coaches, it is important to monitor both the successes and failures of the individual player and team. As they grow older, competition becomes a major theme and players begin to compare themselves to others as young as age eight. Eventually, players experience the selection process for higher division clubs, the Regional Team or National Team.

As coaches, being aware of our players' goals and desires within the game will help us guide their journey. Goal-setting and seasonal evaluations between the coach and player (and even sometimes including the parents) is vital to a player's reality within the sport. These evaluations can be written, verbally communicated and/or expressed in a more formal player-coach meeting.

Players are encouraged to be proactive for feedback throughout the season and coaches are encouraged to provide two "formal" player evaluations throughout the year. A combination of written and verbal reinforcement is encouraged. For ages 10-12, a brief written message from the coach is encouraged to provide the player with positive reinforcement of one or two skills they excel at and also one skill to improve on. It is also an opportunity to tell players how fantastic it is to have them as part of the team and that you enjoy coaching them. For ages 13 and older, a formal written evaluation is encouraged to give positive feedback and needs improvement messages on all four pillars. This should be written and verbally communicated to players.

Player evaluation is an opportunity to discuss with players what their goals are in football—there should be no surprise many players have goals to play at a high level or for the Regional and or National Team at a young age! It is important to introduce the concept of "player selection" early to prepare a child's mindset for both failure and success.



### ***Ages 6-9***

The purpose of football at this age is to be low stress and fun-filled! Trainings will resemble a physical education class and teach the fundamentals of the game. Successful coaches at this level are the ones who can imagine these activities through the player's eyes. Give the energy you want in return via voice tone and body language!

#### **Technical**

- Each player should have a ball and a lot of focus will be on individual-based activities.
- Examples: toe-taps, push and pull with inside of the foot and laces, introduce the sole of the foot to drag the ball; passing technique to a target; lots of scoring!

#### **Tactical**

- Games should be individual or small group focused to achieve a simple task via dribbling, passing or scoring.
- Try to avoid long-lines and waiting, keep the players engaged!
- Tactical explanation will be reduced to simple tips for directional play and teamwork in small-sided play.

#### **Physical**

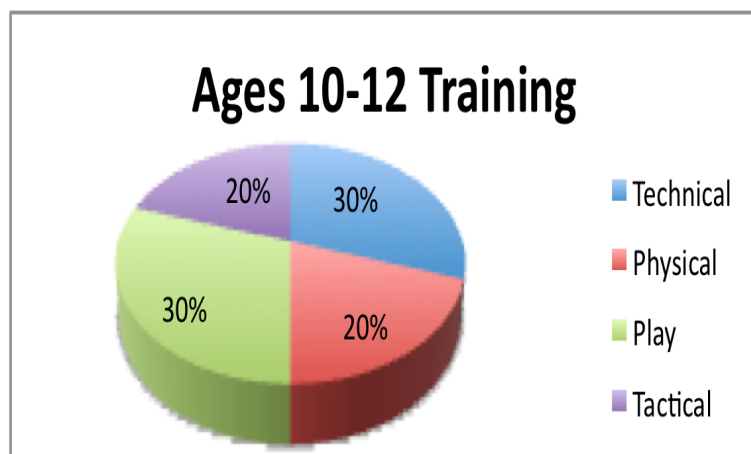
- Motor skills: balance and coordination—when possible incorporate the ball. Use both hands and feet to complete tasks.
- Catching, skipping and other balance and coordination skills are only just starting at this age. Running and jumping movements are being mastered.
- Use sounds, numbers and colors when possible. Children are fine-tuning their ability to categorize at this age and see it as an achievement to do so.

#### **Psychosocial**

- “Me, Mine, My” mindset—children are mostly learning about their own individual feelings and ability to accomplish tasks. They are not able to necessarily empathize with teammates thoughts or feelings so it is critical to provide constant praise and encouragement and to give feedback with detail. For example, “You did it!” versus “*You never gave up and you did it!*”

- Welcome and include parents if necessary. At this age, the parents are the role models.
- Provide “official” uniforms if possible to create a team mindset.

\*By the end of the season, players must be able to handle the ball with one or both feet and both hands; occupy the original position during the game once an action is finished; running, jumping and stopping with and without the ball.



### ***Ages 10-12***

The purpose at this age is still rooted in a fun and positive environment and the main focus is fine-tuning technical skills and introducing basic tactics. Trainings begin to resemble more structured football trainings and it is encouraged for players to try a variety of positions on the field.

It is critical at this age to provide “deep-practice” time where

players are able to be repetitious with technical tasks. “Deep-practice” is the work of mastering a specific, detailed skill via repetition. Some players will pick up the skills faster than others, but the training is still important because it physically trains the player and also mentally trains the player to focus and commit to the task at hand.

### **Technical**

- Dribbling: comfort on the ball, attacking moves, trapping.
- Passing/Receiving: focus on 5-15yard distances and discuss various surfaces on the foot to receive and pass the ball; to receive the ball with the thigh, chest, etc.
- Shooting: hitting the target, following through for power, and use both inside and laces to connect with the ball.
- Heading: technique of how and where to connect with the ball. Body shape and directional...can be a pass or shot!
- Tackling: bravery and strength to tackle with full body. Foot to foot, hip to hip, and arms up for balance.
- Juggling: encourage juggling for ball control and confidence with the ball.

**Tactical**

- Focus on how to be successful in 1v1, 2v1 and 2v2 situations. Play as much as possible!
- Players have significant problem solving abilities at this age and they will be more dynamic with their movements. Introduce “give-and-go” type concepts and constantly ask where the space is for attacking—can you dribble to the space? Can you pass to the space? Can you run to the space? And also what are you trying to protect? The goal. Can you position yourself between the opponent and the goal you are defending?
- Players respond to sequential thoughts and actions: ‘if this, then that’

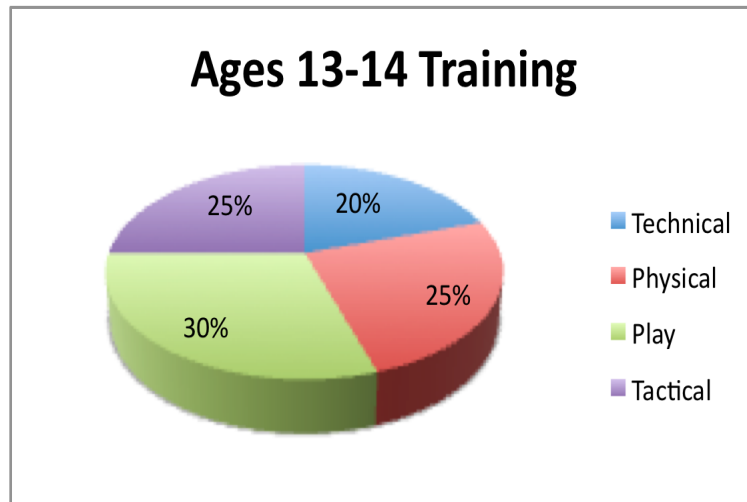
**Physical**

- Players are pre-pubescent so there will be some physical limitations. Each child is on a unique growth plan so it is important to continue to focus on balance and coordination.
- Introduce speed ladders for footwork and hurdles for jumping—incorporate the ball when possible!

**Psychosocial**

- Remind players it is ok to make mistakes—if no one ever made a mistake, no goals would be scored!
- Team loyalty and identity with the club is more important at this age.
- Self-responsibility: bring water, wear shin guards and proper shoes, talk to the coach or have the player stand with the parent to tell if you must miss a training or match.
- Focus on fun and attitude to try your best. The score will become more important to players, but ultimately what they will remember is how the team worked together and if the coach was proud of them.

\*By the end of the season, players must be able to apply technique at age-appropriate game-speed; apply attacking and defending principles in games; apply agility, coordination and speed movements in training and games.



### ***Ages 13-14***

Now players begin to develop a solid understanding of game tactics. They are able to use learned fundamental technique and experiment with advanced technical skills while learning to implement tactical team goals. It is important at this stage for the coach to establish a playing philosophy and style and there should be a flow to training: warm up, small-sided, expanded

play and match simulated play. Continue small-sided games 1v1, 2v2, 3v3, etc. but allow for more problem solving by creating 6-8 players working together in possession and match situations.

#### **Technical**

- Variety of passing and receiving: curved, spin, power, placement
- Variety of shooting: curved, spin, power, placement
- Heading: defending versus attacking technique
- Ball control: ability to work under pressure from an opponent and small spaces
- 1v1 attacking/defending ability

#### **Tactical**

- Understanding of attacking principles in both small and bigger spaces-
  - Creating space for individual and teammates - combination play!
  - Support/depth, width and height
  - Dribble to penetrate, pass to penetrate, shoot to score
  - IMPROVISE! Individual creativity and real-time reaction
  - Team Possession
- Understanding of defending principles in both small and bigger spaces
  - Marking versus Zonal
  - Pressure, Cover, Balance and compactness
  - Tracking players
  - Press versus Delay

- Transition play—how quickly can players switch from attacking mode to defending mode and vice versa?

### **Physical**

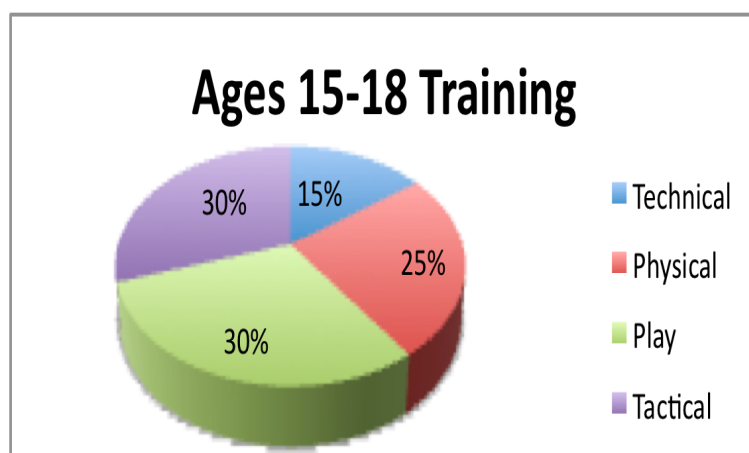
- Reaction and acceleration via agility and spatial awareness
- Speed and agility can be introduced more into training and whenever possible the ball should be incorporated. Simply allowing time to play will essentially create a solid fitness base.
- It is important to be sensitive to pubescent years and that each child is on a unique growth pathway. Avoid overtraining to keep players healthy physically and mentally!

### **Psychosocial**

- Players should be highly self-motivated and also have a collective team spirit.
- Competitiveness is important and attitudes when winning or losing should be monitored and modeled by the coach's tone of individual and team messages and body language. Mistakes will be made, but the most important part is how the player recovers from the mistake!
- Player's ability to communicate on and off the field will show commitment and discipline to follow the coach's instruction and to communicate with teammates.
- Promote player-coach communication and involve parents when necessary.
- Incorporate team building on and off the field for team cohesiveness. This will promote teammate trust versus criticism.

\*By the end of the season, players must be able to pass the ball at speed in small spaces; use combination play and communicate with teammates; combine speed and endurance throughout the game.





### ***Ages 15-18***

While there is always something to improve, it is a fact that at this point players will have completed their natural physical and mental development. Players are now moving out of the developmental phase and into the execution phase. Players should have a solid technical foundation and now the push and pull of learning will deal with tactical decision

making. The purpose at this age is to demand a high tempo for technical tasks and tactical awareness will demand the player to be proactive and anticipate movements on and off the ball.

A player's discipline and commitment to continue to push for improving small percentages across many aspects of the game will determine their ability to increase their overall performance. For truly competitive players aiming to reach their full potential, this is the age to be a true "student of the game." That means to fuel their bodies with proper nutrients and hydration; to maintain and improve strength, speed, agility and endurance with extra work at the gym; to watch video of their own play and professionals to learn about their own habits and to model after professionals; and, to simply be present and focused at their own trainings so that when match day comes the player (and coach!) can perform and enjoy the game!

#### **Technical**

- Speed and accuracy with first touch, passing and shooting—these fundamentals can be rehearsed in the warm up phase of training.
- Passing/Receiving variety: texture, weight and placement of pass; receiving to turn, receiving back to goal, etc. and at a variety of distances
- Crossing and finishing—and a variety of both
- Small-sided games to increase pressure and tempo of technique
- Expanded field of play to allow for ability of long range passing accuracy under pressure
- Can be position specific—high risk and low risk decisions

#### **Tactical**

- Small-sided games to increase pressure and tempo of decision making
- Can be position specific—high risk and low risk decisions

- Attacking/Defending principles within positional lines
- Possession with a purpose—directional, connecting with outlets, controlling tempo of play
- Transition from attacking to defending, defending to attacking
- Switching Play from left to right, right to left
- Counter Attacking
- Building play from the goalkeeper/back line
- Finishing in the final third
- Increased organization for attacking and defending set pieces

### **Physical**

- Explosiveness and power
- Aerobic power—endurance
- Acceleration and deceleration
- Agility
- Perception and awareness for mobility on and off the ball
- Fitness is incorporated within training and must be done appropriately in order for players to reach peak fitness levels at right time of year.

### **Psychosocial**

- Intrinsic motivation—the player's ability to motivate herself
  - The coach must manage the individual player and team to maintain motivation throughout the season.
- Competitiveness—a healthy competitive attitude to find joy in success but also joy in trying, failing and trying again.
- Commitment, respect and discipline for themselves, the team and the coach.
  - Leaders will emerge and coaches must acknowledge and guide players to be an impact for the team

**\*\*Female players at this age in particular will begin to have body image questions, start at a new school or pick up a job and so on. In general, young women will have a tendency to share versus be selfish and often point the finger at themselves. Encouraging individuality, creativeness and team building will allow for a positive and challenging training environment and motivation for match day.**

**\*By the end of the season, players should be able to connect short passes and take shots at speed in small areas; coordinate tactical principles with teammates including transitional play and counter attacks; increase in fitness level and endurance; and eventually, the ability to sustain performance even when fatigued.**

## ***Cardinal Rules of Goalkeeping***

From U-10 to U-18+ teach players to follow these rules when they are in goal.

[Cardinal Rules of Goalkeeping (1979), Winston Dubose and Sam Snow Youth Soccer Player Development Model]

### **1. Go for everything!**

You may not be able to stop every shot that comes your way, but if you make the attempt, you will find that you are stopping shots you never before thought possible. You will also have the personal satisfaction that at least you made the attempt and your teammates will be more forgiving even if you miss.

### **2. After a save – get up quickly!**

If you have gone to the ground to make a save, get back on your feet as fast as possible. Look for a fast break distribution or direct your teammates into position to receive a build-up distribution. This will particularly intimidate your opponents and raise the confidence of your teammates.

### **3. Do not be half-hearted – 100% effort!**

Every time you make a play, it must be with all of your ability. If you go halfway, you will miss saves and possibly injure yourself.

### **4. Communicate loudly!**

You must constantly give brief instructions when on defense. When your team is on the attack, come to the top of your penalty area or beyond and talk to your teammates and offer support to the defenders. Be mentally involved in the entire match, no matter where the ball is.

### **5. No excuses! No whining! Just get on with the match.**

If a goal is scored against you, a corner kick is given up or the shot is a near miss, do not yell at your teammates even if it's their fault. Do not hang your head. The match is no time to point fingers or make excuses. Focus on what lies ahead!

## ***Stages of Goalkeeping***

Wait Until They're Ready (2000), Dr. David Carr

Once players take on the goalkeeper role, they tend to grow in the position through three general stages. Those stages are shot blocker, shot stopper and finally goalkeeper.

**The shot blocker stage** is one where the goalkeeper simply reacts to shots after they have been taken. He or she tries to get into position to make saves and this is sometimes merely blocking a shot and not making a clean catch. The attacking role of the shot blocker is usually just a punt of the ball downfield.

**At the shot stopper stage**, a player has progressed to not only making saves after a shot is taken but also being able to anticipate shots. With this improved ability to read the game, the shot stopper gets into better positions to make saves and begins to stop shots from being taken in the first place.

The shot stopper now comes out on through balls and collects them before a shot is taken. The shot stopper also cuts out crosses before opponents can get to the ball. The shot stopper comes out in one-on-one situations and takes the ball off the attacker's feet. The shot stopper can deal with the ball both before and after a shot is made. Distribution with some tactical thought on the attack is also developing for the shot stopper.

**The goalkeeper stage** is the complete package. The goalkeeper is highly athletic and physically fit. The goalkeeper is mentally tough, composed and confident. The goalkeeper has the full set of skills for the goalkeeper is mentally tough, composed and confident. The goalkeeper has the full set of skills for the fledged goalkeeper is indeed the last line of defense and the first line of attack. A goalkeeper not only makes saves but contributes to the attack with tactical and skillful distribution of the ball. The goalkeeper is physically and verbally connected to the rest of the team no matter where the ball is on the field. A first-rate goalkeeper is mentally involved in the entire match and is therefore physically ready when the time comes to perform.

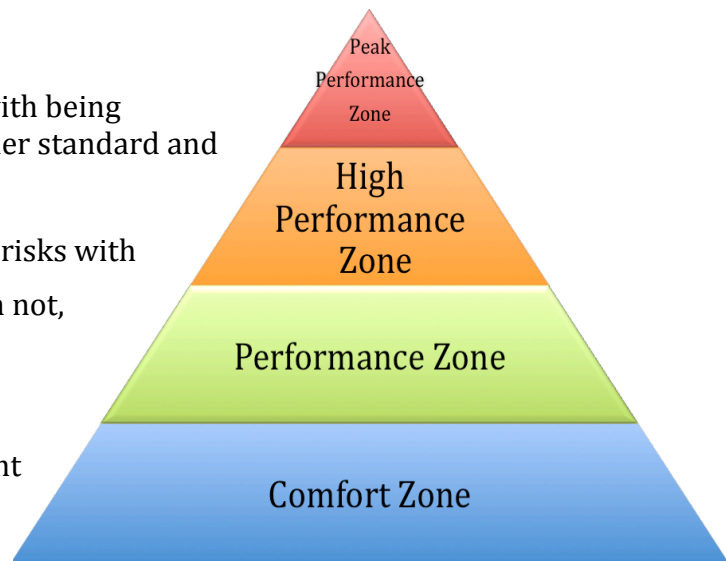
## ***Execution and Performance***

**Peak Performance Zone:** comfortable with being uncomfortable; constantly pushing a higher standard and performing when doing it.

**High Performance Zone:** willing to take risks with being uncomfortable and more often than not, performing when doing it.

**Performance Zone:** showing commitment and occasional risk to be uncomfortable.

**Comfort Zone:** where most players operate; low risk and only push within comfort zone.



Gambetta Sports Training Systems, Inc.

As players mature and get older, there are opportunities to try out for the Regional Team, National Team, higher divisions and professional levels. There is now an element of “player selection” that is part of the natural progression of competition. This element is also found when players compare playing time as a starter, substitute, not receiving any playing time or even when finding themselves “on the bubble” as a reserve player.

At this stage in a player’s career, as coaches we must be sensitive to what we as coaches can and cannot control and what factors the players can and cannot control. Players can adopt components such as fitness, training regime and tactics. However, genetics, technique and the ability of a player to mentally perform in a High to Peak Performance Zone during later in their career cannot be altered or is extremely difficult to alter. It is not to say players cannot keep learning—they can learn anything. The question is, can they execute? Can they consistently perform that learned skill and tactic in a match and at what level? This is why it is critical the youth development plan is established and expectations are consistent for the players from a young age. The work built across the Four Pillars at a young age will determine their ability to execute technique and tactics as a “selected” player performing at a higher level.

## ***What does a selected player look like?***

Each player is unique and will bring different qualities and personality to the field. Nevertheless, there are clear common denominators that are consistently found at the highest level. A solid foundation of technique and physical fitness is critical to perform at a demanding pace for 90minutes. Tactically, a player’s ability to understand the fundamental principles of the game and to apply them within the team philosophy and tactics will often determine their role on the team.

While these components of technique, tactics and physical ability are more often than not objective qualities; it is the mentality of a player that will bring them from good to great and off “bubble” and onto the field. A player’s mentality has the power to influence the team as a whole, both negatively and positively. When selecting a player, coaches seek the resilient athlete who is goal oriented, sees competition as a challenge, has emotional control and is intentionally flexible to find a role on the team. A player’s mentality is part of the “X-Factor” that coaches look for and parallel with a winning.

Growth Mindset	Fixed Mindset
I’m the boss of me, I can change and learn	Look the part, not necessarily play the part
Persists, no excuses—finds a way!	Gives up, finds excuses
Intrinsic Motivation	Avoids challenges
Models after teammate’s success	Threatened by teammate’s success
Learns from feedback	Feedback makes player feel inadequate
Success comes from small, daily learning	Success is only talent based
Internal Locus of Control – player believes they have control over the outcome and take responsibility for their actions.	External Locus of Control – do not believe they can change their circumstances and often blames others.

## Weekly Plan Intensity Example - For Ages 13+

### WEEKLY PLAN

Below applies only to intermediate and advanced stages

The game is the most demanding practice of the player's week. The intensity will decrease at the beginning of the week, increase closer to the level of game intensity at the middle of the week and then decrease again at the end of the week to provide the body enough time to recover for the game. These principles apply mainly to intermediate and advanced stage players.

The weekly plan is organized as indicated in the graphic:

#### 1. TACTICAL

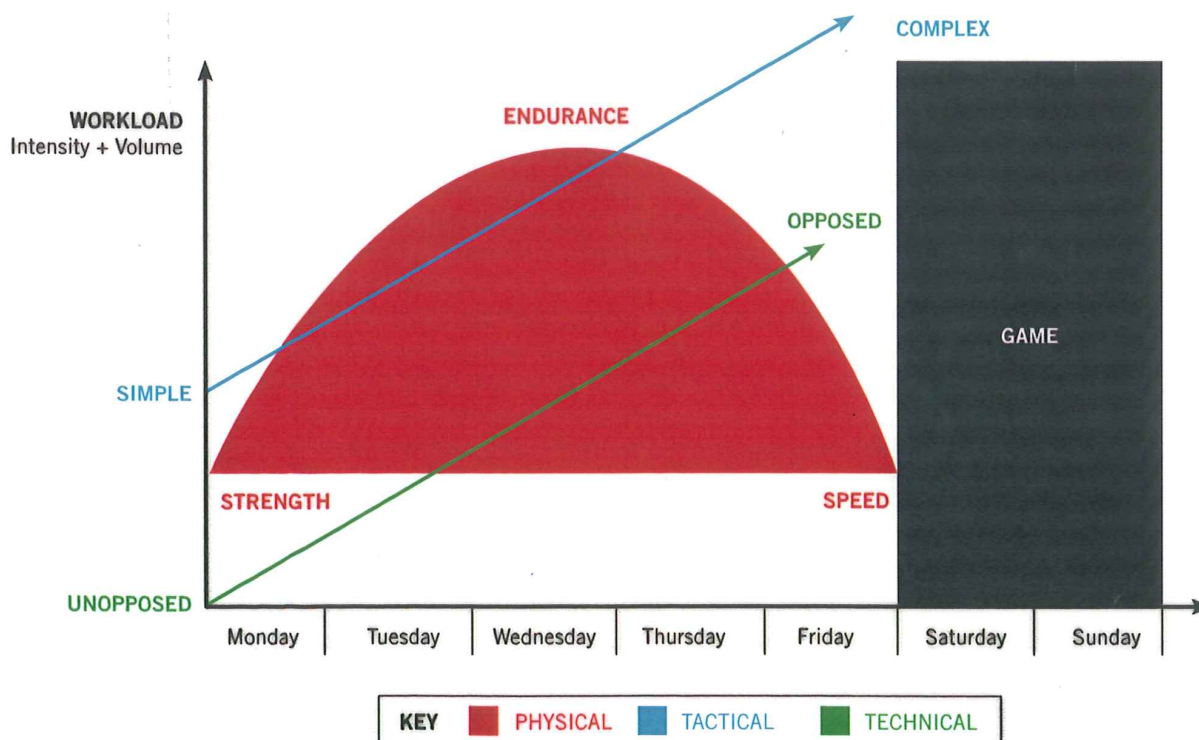
At the beginning of the week, the coach will use simple practices which increase in complexity throughout the week.

#### 2. TECHNICAL

At the beginning of the week, the coach will use more unopposed practices focused on the quality of execution. By the end of the week, the coach will use opposed practices to increase speed, competitiveness and awareness.

#### 3. PHYSICAL

At the beginning of the week, the physical work will focus on strength and injury prevention. By the middle of the week, the workload will increase using endurance training methods; and at the end of the week the training will focus on speed.





Weekly Plan Example by Age

Examples of a weekly plan for the different stages

STAGE	TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
INITIAL U6 to U8	2 sessions 75 min		Warm-up Agility & basic mo- tor skills Dribbling Scrimmage		Warm-up Agility & speed Passing & receiving Scrimmage		Game	
BASIC U9 to U12	3 sessions 90 min	Warm-up Agility & coordination Ball control Attacking principles Scrimmage		Warm-up Agility & speed Turning & shooting Possession Scrimmage	Warm-up Reaction & acceleration Passing & receiving Playing out from the back Scrimmage		Game	
INTERMEDIATE U13 to U14	4 sessions 90 min	Warm-up Coordination & flexibility Ball control Attacking principles Scrimmage	Warm-up Receiving to turn Aerobic capacity Possession Scrimmage		Warm-up Passing & receiving Aerobic power Transition Scrimmage	Warm-up Reaction & acceleration Shooting Finishing in the final third Scrimmage		Game
ADVANCED U15 to U18	4 sessions 120 min	Warm-up Turning Strength endurance Possession Scrimmage	Warm-up Receiving to turn Aerobic power Transition Scrimmage		Warm-up Passing & receiving Aerobic lactic Counter attacking Scrimmage	Warm-up Reaction & acceleration Shooting Zonal defending Scrimmage		Game

WORKLOAD KEY

1= VERY LOW

2= LOW

3= MID

4= HIGH

5= VERY HIGH



**Resources**

1. Claudio Reyna and Dr. Javier Perez. U.S. Youth Soccer Curriculum, (2013).
2. Coyle, Daniel. The Talent Code, (2009).
3. Dr. David Carr. Wait Until They're Ready, (2000).
4. Winston Dubose and Sam Snow. Cardinal Rules of Goalkeeping-Youth Soccer Player Development Model (2013).
5. Dave Chesler. The Evolution of Youth Academy Programs 2001-2013, German Football Federation, (2013).
6. Bob Browaeys. The Philosophy of Youth Development at the Belgium FA (2010).

**Book List**

1. The Talent Code, by Daniel Coyle.
2. Catch Them Being Good: Everything You Need to Know to Successfully Coach Girls, by Tony DiCicco and Collen Hacker.
3. Mindset, by Carol Dweck.
4. Bounce, by Matthew Syed.

**Links List**

1. <http://www.performance.fourfourtwo.com/>
2. <http://www.youtube.com/user/Coerverofficial>
3. <http://www.soccertutor.com/>
4. <http://Soccerxpert.com/>
5. [Treningsøkta.no](http://Treningsøkta.no)