



Player Development Benchmarks

U-4 – U-8: The Discovery

- Learn rules of the game
- Understand role of teammates, coach, and referee
- Learn to control the ball with feet

U-9 – U-11: The Foundation

- Establish a passion for the game
- Gain competence with basic technical components as listed:
 - Dribbling, passing, receiving, shooting, and tackling
- Encourage individual self-confidence
- Introduce concept of collective responsibility
- Demonstrate tactical concepts in variations of groups 2v2 to 5v5
 - Introduce principles of attacking and defending
 - Teach player roles of attacking and defending

U-12 – U-14: The Investment

- Develop individual technical skill, and their relevance in game-like situations
- Further promote each player's self-confidence
- Continue to focus on team spirit and collective responsibility
- Intensify work ethic and dedication
- Further develop tactical concepts from 5v5 to 8v8
 - Teach principles of attacking and defending in larger groups
- Introduce various systems of play (*Example: 1-4-4-2, 1-3-5-2, 1-4-3-3*)
 - Define individual player roles and responsibilities specific to various systems of play
 - Introduce zonal defending
 - Employ various styles of attacking (*Example: possession build-up, flank attacking, direct-service attacking, counter-attack, etc.*)
- Provide environment which will promote individual player self-sufficiency as problem-solvers and decision-makers as related to soccer quandaries

U-15 – U-18: The Commitment

- Modify technical ability
- Functional training
 - Address each player's role and expectations within each system of play
 - Identify optimal system of play and style of play given the conditions of the field, temperature, field dimensions, roster size, strengths and weaknesses of opponents, as well as strengths and weaknesses of own team
- Playing to protect a lead

- Playing to overcome a deficit
- Perform teambuilding exercises to achieve a 'singleness of purpose'
- Focus on fitness component
- Give players responsibility to solve soccer quandaries in context of game-related situations
- Functional communication among teammates
- Goal setting