



**Kansas Youth Soccer Association
State Coaching Philosophy and Curriculum
Olympic Development and Premier Club Teams**

Introduction

This age-group curriculum for coaching soccer players U-6 through high school is provided by the Kansas Youth Soccer Association State Coaching Education Staff to give direction and specific goals to the on-going player development that is taking place in hundreds of clubs throughout the state of Kansas. It is our purpose, through this document, to provide all clubs with the necessary framework for developing players to their utmost potential. While this curriculum is not necessarily a secret recipe for developing the next Lindsay Tarpley or Freddy Adu, it can and will provide the club director and the members of their coaching staffs an idea of what should be the primary focus for training and proper development at each age group.

This curriculum has been designed through careful research and collaboration. Well over 25 different reference materials have been consulted to support this document, as well as numerous nationally licensed coaches and experts from across the state and region. Special recognition should be given to the United States Soccer Federation and National Soccer Coaches Association of America coaching education departments for continuing to provide valuable materials for coaching and player development. *Please view the "Works Consulted" page at the end of this document for a complete list of reference materials used to develop this curriculum.*

Please keep in mind that the game of soccer is constantly changing; therefore, our curriculum for training soccer players must also flex and change as our players and the game evolves. Similarly, there are always exceptions to the rule. For example, you, as a youth coach, may have the special opportunity to train an exceptional athlete, one who constantly stands out above the rest of the players on your team. If this player is regularly exceeding expectations and developing beyond the boundaries of the age-group curriculum, then it is up to the knowledge and ability of you as the coach to begin introducing new ideas and challenges to them so they do not become bored with a game they consider to be, at that time, too easy. The State Coaching Education Staff will frequently evaluate this curriculum, regularly consult resources and adjust as needed in order to give an accurate idea of where the focus of training should be at each level of development. Ultimately, it is up to the youth coaches around our state to evaluate their teams and players and develop training sessions that improve our players' ability and insight into the game.

"Be not afraid of going slowly, be only afraid of standing still." - Chinese Proverb

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Points for Player Development: U-6 through High School

- The game is the best teacher- let the players learn from it by setting up proper opportunities for them to play.
- Allow the players to learn in environments that are sensitive to age and abilities (emotional and athletic) and that offer a variety of experiences.
- A competitive environment at the youth level (U-6 through U-12) encourages decisions from player and coach alike that focus on *player development rather than winning* (favoring ball skill and creativity as the means to find success within the rules and spirit of the game).
- At the junior level (U-13 through U-19), technical skill and attacking soccer are still important themes, but now there is greater focus on developing players' insight into the game by emphasizing the role of the game itself as an environment for learning.
- Players must be given the initiative to make decisions in matches, not the coaches and parents.
- Mistakes are a positive aspect of learning to play the game, and the best learning environment is the one that balances success and challenge.

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Essential Goals for Player Development

- Players should understand the general principles of attacking and defending.
- Players should understand attacking and defending roles based on the thirds of the field.
- Players should be able to dribble the ball away from pressure and into space, control the ball on the ground, and strike the ball with different surfaces of both feet.
- Players should be able to use the different surfaces of the foot to finish scoring opportunities.
- Players should also be able to head and control the ball with different surfaces from balls played in the air.
- Players should receive the ball with their bodies “sideways-on” when receiving passes, and should always look forward and back before receiving it.
- Players should view the goalkeeper as a crucial option in the build-up out of the back.
- Players should understand how and when to move into new supporting positions in order to help the team go forward or circulate the ball and keep possession.
- Players should understand how to create space away from defenders when playing with their backs to goal (checking to the ball/ creating space for self).
- Defenders should be comfortable playing numbers up, numbers down and even numbers in the back.
- Players should know when and how to combine with other players in a variety of ways.
- Players should understand how to attack and defend individually and in small groups.
- Players should understand how to defend as a team in a zonal system.
- Players should understand how to attack and defend offside space.
- Players should be able to perform all technical skills relative to time, space and opponents.

DISCOVERY PHASE: Under-6

Coaching Focus: Individual Development, Introduction to Game and FUN.

The Coach: Sensitive teacher; enthusiastic; energetic; patient; organized.

Recommended License: USSF Youth Modules and/or NSCAA State Diploma.

- Coaches should provide activities that allow players to have frequent ball contact- one ball per player.
- “Fun Games” should be at the core of all training sessions.
- All activities should include every player- limit the use of lines.
- Age appropriate *Coerver-type ball skills* should be introduced at this age as well as entry-level individual skills.

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- Players should be encouraged to go 1 v 1 and dribble to beat an opponent whenever possible.
 - Small-sided games up to 3 v 3 (no goalkeepers).
 - Winning and keeping score should not be a priority.
 - Players should leave training feeling good about themselves and wanting to play more.
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DISCOVERY PHASE: Under-7/8

Coaching Focus: Individual Development, Ball Control, Introduction to Game and FUN.

The Coach: Sensitive teacher; enthusiastic; energetic; patient; organized.

Recommended License: USSF Youth Modules and/or NSCAA State Diploma.

- Dribbling for possession, speed, and to beat an opponent is the primary focus.
 - Small-sided games should be the core content of training sessions along with “fun games” to promote ball contact and technical development.
 - Age appropriate *Coerver-type ball skills* and *fast footwork* can foster individual development at this age.
 - Development of striking the ball with the different surfaces of the foot.
 - Introducing spatial awareness.
 - Train to create 2 v 1 situations from diamond.
 - 4 v 4 (no goalkeepers) should be the final phase in training and in matches.
 - Winning and keeping score should not be a priority.
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ROMANCE PHASE: Under-9/10- “The Golden Age of Learning”

Coaching Focus: Individual Skill Development, Support and Ball Movement, Introduction to Team Play (passing), Technical Development and Small-Group Tactics

The Coach: Sensitive teacher; enthusiastic; energetic; patient; organized.

Recommended License: USSF “E” Certificate and/or NSCAA Regional Diploma

- Technical repetition is the primary focus- Dribbling, Striking the Ball, Passing, Receiving, and Tackling.
- Training should include individual skill work, technical repetition, small-sided games, and “fun games” maximizing ball contact and emphasizing technical development.

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- Age appropriate *Coerver-type ball skills* and *fast footwork* can be included in training when possible.
- Attacking and defending 1 v 1 is crucial at this age (building on previous years' experience).
- Introduction to movement of the ball- checking out and in to create space and receive ball.
- Passing with different surfaces of the foot should continue to be developed and encouraged.
- Introduce players to combining with others and to create 2 v 1 situations (combination play).
- 6 v 6 (5 and goalkeeper) should be final phase in training and matches (if possible).
- Force players to play under pressure as often as possible.
- Allow players to occasionally make teams and keep score but winning should not be overemphasized.

ROMANCE PHASE: Under-11/12- "The Golden Age of Learning"

Coaching Focus: Individual Skill Development, Support and Combination Play, Technical Development and Large-Group Tactics (8 v 8).

The Coach: Sensitive teacher; enthusiastic; energetic; patient; organized.

Recommended License: USSF "E" Certificate and/or NSCAA Regional Diploma.

- Training should still focus on technical repetition.
- 1 v 1 battling should occur often in training.
- Off the ball movements strengthened.
- Passing with different weight and texture (speed and spin) should be slowly developed.
- Players should be able to pass and shoot over distance.
- Crossing and heading can be carefully introduced and encouraged.
- Training should be competitive and score should be kept on all training exercises.
- Combination play expanded (give and go, overlap, takeover).
- Understanding spatial awareness to create space for teammates.
- Emphasis on economical training (combine as many of the components of coaching as possible into training activities and games in order to obtain maximum results in a minimum amount of time).
- Individual and small-group defending skills.
- Small group tactics- 2 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 1, 3 v 2, 3 v 3, 4 v 2, 4 v 3, 4 v 4
- Training and matches should finish with 8 v 8 (7 and goalkeeper)- playing in three lines- backs, midfielders, forwards.

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COMMITMENT PHASE: U-13/U-14

Coaching Focus: Introduction to Large-Group Tactics, Technical Mastery, Hone Small-Group Tactics and Team Building.

The Coach: Strong personality; knowledgeable; enthusiastic; patient but demanding; knowledge of systems of play.

Recommended License: USSF “D” License and/or NSCAA Advanced Regional Diploma.

- The primary focus is mastering technical skill at this age.
- Players must begin “personalizing” their games in this phase.
- Coaching 11 v 11 team play should begin (phase play, shadow play).
- Training should include decision-making (tactics) while under pressure.
- Long ball service polished.
- Various forms of 1 v 1 battles used in training.
- Competitive yet light-hearted atmosphere- Score should be kept regularly.
- Players trained to play with their backs to goal (more likely sideways on).
- Heading strengthened regularly.
- Soccer-specific fitness can be included in training sessions (use caution).
- Creating space and checking in and out of space must be refined.
- Small group tactics- 2 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 2, 3 v 3, 4 v 2, 4 v 4

COMMITMENT PHASE: U-15 through High School

Coaching Focus: Team Building, Functional Training, Tactical Development, and Learning to Win.

The Coach: Charismatic; experienced; knowledgeable; disciplinarian; organized; managerial know-how; true student of the game.

Recommended License: USSF “C” License and/or NSCAA National Diploma or higher.

- Training should focus on the skills specific to positional (functional) play.
- Train efficient movement on and off the ball.
- Fitness becomes extremely important to achieving victory.
- Players must become coach-independent.
- Appreciation and knowledge of various systems of play.
- Highly competitive environment, yet teambuilding is very important.

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- Small group tactics- 4 v 4, 7 v 7, 9 v 9

**SUGGESTED SYSTEM AND STYLE OF PLAY FOR OPTIMAL PLAYER
DEVELOPMENT (11 v 11)**

- **1-3-4-3 or 1-4-3-3**
 - **Indirect Style of Play (playing through the thirds of the field)**
 - **Zonal and Man-Marking Defense (expose players to both)**
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Goalkeeping Age Objectives

By Peter Mellor- National Teams Goalkeeping Coach and Coordinator

6-8 Year Olds

Technical: Hand-eye coordination and balance games.

Tactical: Rotation of all players through the goals so that every player is exposed to goalkeeping.

Psychological: FUN! Games must be enjoyable.

Fitness: FUN movement games.

8-10 Year Olds

Technical: Principles of goalkeeping (see below), footwork exercises, getting set (feet), general handling techniques (thrown service- all heights- small goal), distribution (rolling and throwing to a teammate, control and short passing with both feet, short volleying from hands and with both feet, striking a still ball).

Tactical: Rotation of all players through the team. Everybody plays in each position.

Psychological: FUN and enjoyable. Simple progression of techniques- "one step at a time."

Fitness: Teach warm-up, cool-down, and stretching exercises from down on the ground and up to set position.

10-12 Year Olds

Technical: Principles of goalkeeping (see below), footwork exercises, getting set (feet), general handling techniques, basic diving techniques (general breakdown), dealing with crosses (thrown service), distribution (first touch receive, control and short passing with both feet, underarm bowling and overarm, throwing to targets, volleying from the hands, goalkicks), 1 v 1 basic principles, "QUALITY NOT QUANTITY."

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Tactical: Explain the basic tactical role of the goalkeeper- positional play, basic angle play, introduction to the line of the flight of the ball (attacking the ball).

Psychological: Simple progression in techniques- set standards, pay attention to detail, what qualities does a goalkeeper need?

Fitness: Warm-ups and cool-downs, introduction to the importance of stretching, flexibility and mobility exercise (footwork).

12-14 Year Olds

Technical: Principles of goalkeeping, set position/general handling (techniques at all heights), shot stopping, techniques of catching/deflecting/boxing, diving techniques (collapse save, step and save, save/step/power, and save/reaction save/ recovery save), dealing with crosses (chipped serve/catching, punching both opposed and unopposed), distribution (dealing with the back pass both opposed and unopposed, importance of support, all techniques of throwing (bowl, sidearm, overarm), goal kicks, volleying, and introduction to half volleying, 1 v 1 principles, "QUALITY NOT QUANTITY."

Tactical: 1 v 1 with the defense, distance of support of the defense, communication (quality not quantity), functional and game related practices (small-sided games/decision making), introduction and training in the full size goal with markings as often as possible).

Psychological: Motivational/ technical talks (10-15 minutes maximum), dealing with problems created by the "full-sized goal," match and training preparation, growth and development (diet, nutrition, lifestyle), dealing with both positive and negative assessments (praise and criticism), dealing with the selection and tryouts (both positive and negative results), soccer terminology.

Fitness: Warm-ups and cool-downs, plyometric exercises, goalkeeping specific stretching, footwork (all directions, planting of the feet for change of lateral direction, speed (18 yards max distance- penalty area).

14-16 Year Olds

Technical: Principles of goalkeeping (paying attention to detail), footwork/ set positions/general handling techniques, all diving techniques, narrowing the angle, shot stopping (catch, deflect, recovery save), practices to improve reactions, dealing with crosses (served from all areas/angles, opposed and unopposed, and in functional practices and small-sided games), distribution (dealing with the back pass with pressure, giving good angles, distance of support, giving quality communication, control- first touch with both feet, variation of pass, goal kicks, volleying, half volleying,

and introduction to side volleying, improved range, power, and variation in throwing techniques), video analysis, feedback, “QUALITY NOT QUANTITY.”

Tactical: Key issues in distance of support including recognizing pressure on and off the ball, communication (working with the defensive unit to build up understanding of each other’s strengths, weaknesses, and responsibilities), presence, knowing positioning of teammates, making small adjustments often to stay in line with the ball (footwork), game related situations (functional and small-sided games- 11 v 11), organization in defending set plays on free kicks and corner kicks.

Psychological: Motivational/ talks/videos (15-minute maximum), teams discussions/presentations, training and match preparation, lifestyles/ discipline, dealing with competition, physical confrontations, dealing with pressure (internal/external), dealing with both success and failure.

Fitness: Warm-ups and cool-downs, stretching, flexibility, mobility and strengthening exercise, plyometric exercise, recovery exercises, introduction to agility exercises (low intensity/ low reps), weight training (low weights/ high reps), footwork (all directions/ all goalkeeping movements), speed (20 yards maximum).

The 10 Principles of Goalkeeping from Tony Waiters and the NSCAA Goalkeeping Academy Curriculum

1. The Hands- King Consideration

- Hands-Arms-Shoulders
 - The goalkeeper must regard the arms and hands as the same thing. If the arms are not right, the hands cannot do their job.
 - The hands and the arms lead to the shoulders, and all goalkeepers (and their coaches) should be aware of the importance of shoulder position. If the shoulders are square to the ball (i.e. facing the ball) the goalkeeper’s body position will not be far wrong.

2. Shape

- The Gorilla Shape (concave posture)
- Open-Looking Out (body should always be open to the ball and to the field of play)

3. Ever-Ready Consideration

- The goalkeeper is a dancer- forever moving in a controlled, flowing and rhythmic way. There is not a time, nor a place on the soccer field where the keeper should be standing still other than in one situation- when he/she “sets” himself/herself a split second before a shot is taken.
- Always remaining alert, alive and ready!

4. “Stay on Your Feet!”

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- Stay on your feet for as long as possible.
- Dive only when absolutely necessary.

5. **Secondary Cover**

- Getting **A**s **M**uch **O**f the **B**ody **B**ehind the **B**all as possible (**AMOB III**)
- Getting muscle and soft tissue as the “back-up” rather than boney surfaces.

6. **Set Consideration**

- Set just before the shot is taken.
- It is essential that in the “set” position that not only is the gorilla shape adopted, but the body weight is also evenly distributed on both feet.

7. **Reaction Factor (React- Don't Anticipate)**

- Good goalkeepers will “play the percentages” and should not sacrifice good positions by anticipating the shooter.

8. **Recovery**

- Recovery back to the feet is a key principle in the art and science of goalkeeping.
- The last place a goalkeeper should be is lying on the ground.

9. **Decisions, Communication and Organization**

- As the last defender, the goalkeeper must be the eyes and voice of the team.
- Must shout clear, concise, loud and authoritative instructions.

10. **First Attacker**

- After making the save, receiving a back pass, or taking a goal kick, the goalkeeper takes on the role of the first attacker.
- Safety
- Penetration and/or Possession

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