

The Youth Academy Model

OYSAN's Recommended Approach to Organizing Youth Soccer Programs



US Soccer: Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States

http://images.ussoccer.com/Documents/cms/ussf/Best_Practices.pdf



US Soccer: Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States

“There is not just “one way” to teach soccer to players, nor is there just one style of coaching. There is a broad spectrum of styles and methods for how each of us experiences the game. Some of this comes from our backgrounds, while some of this also is the product of our own personalities”.

“At the youth and junior levels, however, there is a set of fundamental principles that must be considered by anyone involved with soccer. In general, young soccer players require a certain amount of uninterrupted play. This allows them to experience soccer first hand. They should be allowed the opportunity to experiment, and with that, succeed and fail”.

US Soccer: Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States

“The coach’s long term goal is to prepare the player to successfully recognize and solve the challenges of the game on his or her own. It is vital that the coach approaches soccer with this in mind”.

“The most fundamental skill in soccer is individual mastery of the ball and the creativity that comes with it. This should be a priority in training and games, especially in the early years. As this skill is mastered, the rest of the game becomes easier - both to teach and to learn”.

Why a Youth Academy Model?

Youth Academy programs have emerged as the 21st century alternative to the frustrating shortfalls in soccer development displayed by most pre-teens.

This void is heavily influenced by coaching quality, the youth soccer environment, and the unhealthy pressures to win at critical periods in the development process.

The Youth Academy model seeks to improve individual player development, satisfaction and retention, and build a less-pressured youth soccer environment for coaches, adult spectators, and match officials.

Why a Youth Academy Model?

On game day on every field across America, almost half the "participants" are sitting on the sidelines waiting for their turn to play.... So are their parents!



Why a Youth Academy Model?

With the decline of free play, adult models and adult ideals have been imposed on youth sport.

Young children are being introduced to formal competition long before they are technically, tactically, physically or emotionally ready.



Why a Youth Academy Model?

The vast majority of youth soccer coaches are volunteers with no appreciation for Long-Term Athletic Development.....

.....so they naturally over-organize and over-coach!



Why a Youth Academy Model?

**Organized sport loses 70% of its participants
by age 14.**

**Obesity rates are reaching epidemic levels as kids
turn away from activity – often for life!**



Why a Youth Academy Model?

Kids universally cite adult-related reasons for quitting sport. Kids participate for action, involvement, excitement and friendship; instead, they gets laps, lectures, lines and constant criticism.

That's NO FUN!

"Football associations that are serious about the game's health and growth are duty-bound to promote mass participation and interest...Grassroots football, which acts as a vehicle for social integration, health and happiness, is the aim. As a by-product, talents will emerge. In Brazil, a love of the ball, expression through small-sided games, and the sheer joy of playing have been cultivated to such an extent that football passion and creativity have become part of the nation's DNA.

Andy Roxburgh – UEFA Technical Director

Why a Youth Academy Model?

Practice activities and match coaching are often centered on winning “now” strategies, such as....

Anchoring the defenders; teaching “plays” and restarts; strategically positioning the best players; limiting playing time for the weaker players; and discouraging dribbling, risk-taking, and creativity.



When We Were Young...

The Playing Numbers were Flexible!

The Playing Rules were Flexible!

The Game Duration was Measured in Hours!

We played Games; there were no Drills!

The Oldest Kids Were In Charge!

The Biggest Kids Refereed!

The Games Had To Be Competitive!

If things got boring, we played "Next Goal Wins" and picked new teams!

We Made Sure We Had Balanced Teams!

We Took Care Of The Weaker Kids!

Best of all: NO ADULTS!

The Youth Academy Model

**Typically Encompasses Ages 4 through 12
for Community-Based Organizations**

**Typically Encompasses Ages 8 through 12
for Club-Based Organizations**



Traditional “Team + Subs” Format for U-6

Recommended Playing Format: 3v3

Recommended Roster: 6

Average Playing Time: 50% (3/6)

U-6 Game Time: 32 Minutes (4x8 Minutes)

Average On-Field Participation Time: 16 Minutes

Active On-Ball Participation Time (Ave):

2.7 Minutes

(16 Minutes / 6 Players)

(Assuming No Stoppages In Play And Equitable Contacts)

Traditional “Team + Subs” Model for U-8

Recommended Playing Format: 4v4

Recommended Roster: 8

Average Playing Time: 50% (4/8)

U-8 Game Time: 40 Minutes (4x10 Minutes)

Average On-Field Participation Time: 20 Minutes

Active On-Ball Participation Time (Ave):

2.5 Minutes

(20 Minutes / 8 Players)

(Assuming No Stoppages In Play And Equitable Contacts)

Traditional “Team + Subs” Model for U-10

Required Playing Format: 6v6

Maximum Roster: 10

Average Playing Time: 60% (10/6)

U-10 Game Time: 50 Minutes (2x25 Minutes)

Average On-Field Participation Time: 30 Minutes

Active On-Ball Participation Time (Ave):

2.5 Minutes

(30 Minutes / 12 Players)

(Assuming No Stoppages In Play And Equitable Contacts)

Playing Format Comparison

	U-6	Academy Format	U-8	Academy Format	U-10	Academy Format
Recommended /Required Playing Formats	3v3	~3v3	4v4	~4v4	6v6	~6v6
Recommended Roster	6	N/A	8	N/A	10	N/A
Average Game Duration (Mins)	32 4x8	~60	40 4x10	~90	50 2x25	90-120
Average Playing Time (Mins) Game Duration / On-Field %	16 32/.5	~60 (3.75x)	20 40/.5	~90 (4.5x)	30 50/.6	90-120 (3.5-4x)
Active On-Ball Time* (Mins) Playing Time / # Players	2.7 16/6	10 (3.7x)	2.5 20/8	11.25 (4.5x)	2.5 30/12	10 (4x)

*Active On-Ball Time Assumes No Stoppages In Play and Equal Ball Contacts

Why a Youth Academy Model?

Traditional Format	Academy Format
Adult-Centered Approach	Child-Centered Approach
Team Rosters	Club Rosters
Fixed Teams	Open Enrollment
Fixed Tournament Rosters	Fluid Tournament Rosters
Player Transfers	No Player Transfers
“Official” Referees	Players / Coaches Referee
Team Coaches	Age Group Coaches
Team Practices	Age Group Practices
Team Development	Individual Development
Team + Subs	100% Participation
Focus on Winning	Focus on Enjoyment

Why a Youth Academy Model?

Traditional Format	Academy Format
Inefficient Use of Space	Efficient Use of Space
Inefficient Use of Time	Efficient Use of Time
More Anxious Players	More Relaxed Players
More Anxious Parents	More Relaxed Parents
More Anxious Coaches	More Relaxed Coaches
Lower Retention Rates	Higher Retention Rates
Less Creative Players	More Creative Players
Lower Participation Rates	Higher Participation Rates
Lower Fitness Demands	Higher Fitness Demands
Less Fun	More Fun

Basic “Play Day” Logistics

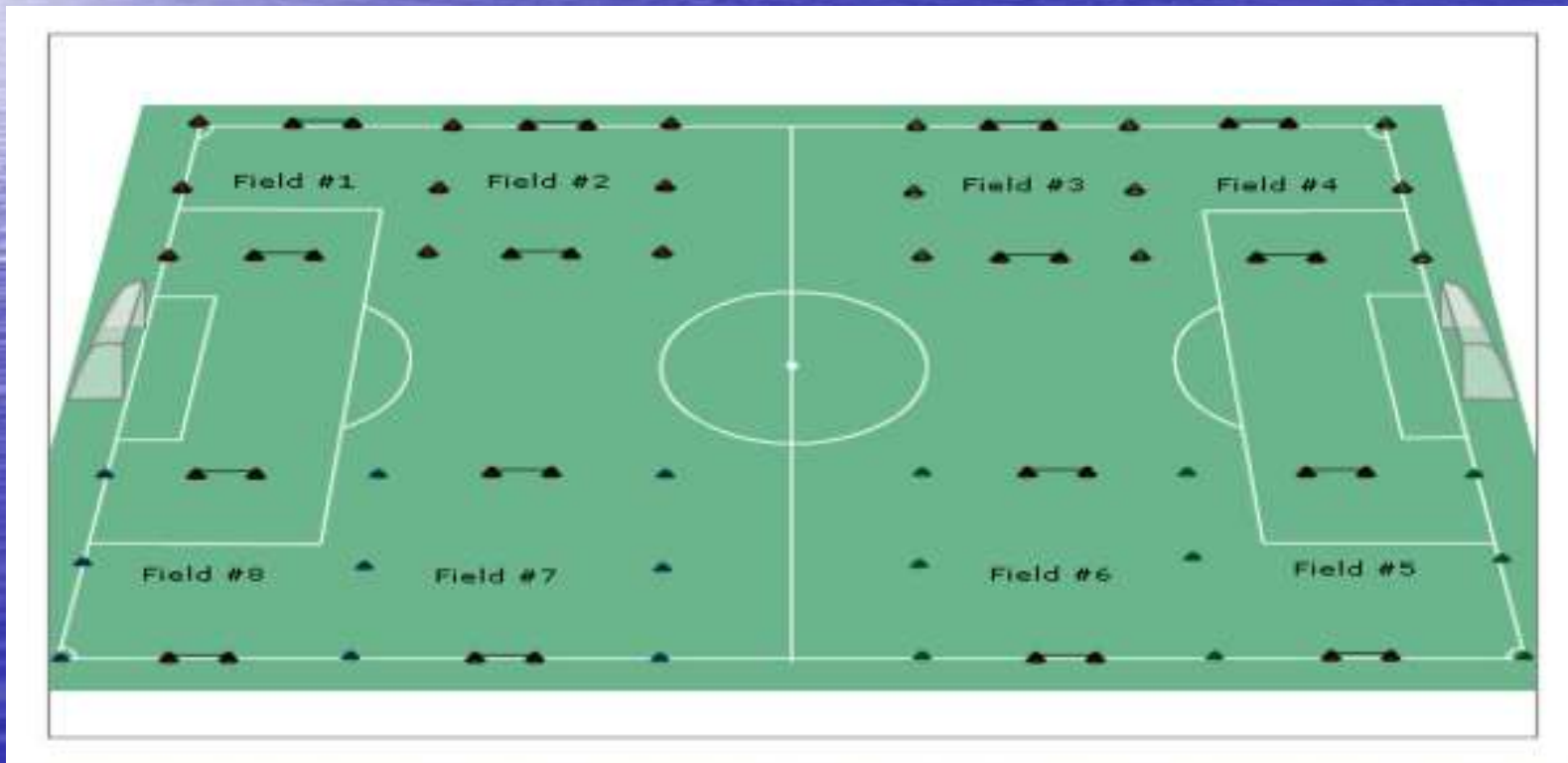


Basic "Play Day" Logistics: U-6

Getting Started

Pre-line or pre-cone fields to accommodate every player

- **48+ U-6's per large field** (8 fields @ 25 x 20 yards)
(3v3 / 3v3 / 4v3 / 4v4 / adults / no adults)



Basic "Play Day" Logistics: U-8

Getting Started

- **32 - 40 U-8's per large field** (4 fields @ ~40 x ~25 yards)
(3v3 / 4v3 / 4v4 / 5v4 / 5v5 / GK / No GK / adults / no adults)



Basic "Play Day" Logistics: U-10

Getting Started

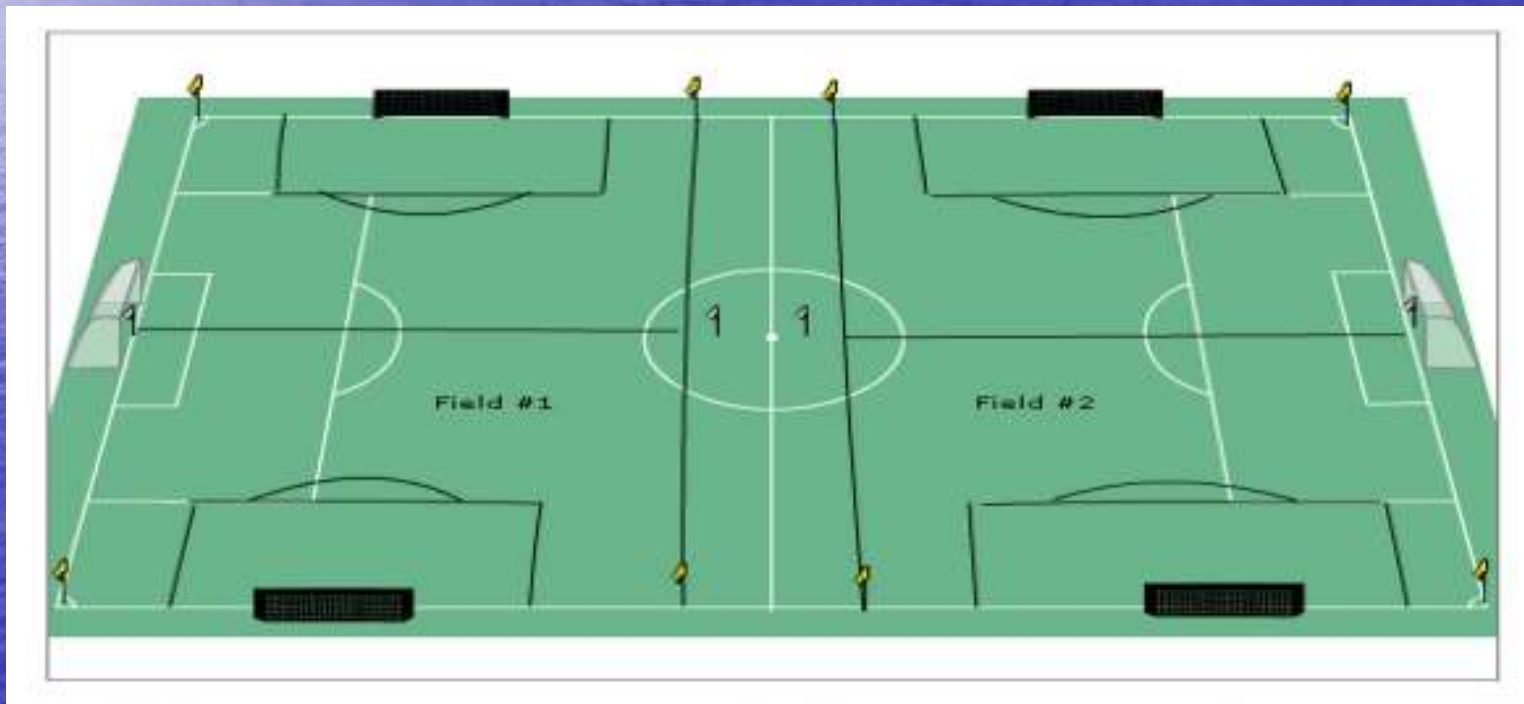
- **36+ U-10's per large field** (3 fields @ ~55 x ~36 yards)
(5v5 / 6v5 / 6v6 / 7v6)



Basic "Play Day" Logistics: U-12

Getting Started

- **32-36 U-12's per large field** (2 fields @ ~75-80 x ~55 yards)
(8v8 / 9v8 / 9v9)



Basic "Play Day" Logistics

Getting Started

Prepare Scrimmage Vests (or use reversible shirts)

Start Games Upon Player's Arrival

- **U-6 with a "coach"**
- **U-8 with / without a "coach"**
- **U-10 on their own**



Basic "Play Day" Logistics

Game Duration: 10-15 Minutes

Game Volume: 60-120 Minutes, depending on...

- **Age**
- **Motivation**
- **Field Availability**
- **Competition Format (U-8/10)**
- **Weather**



Game Formats

- **Rotate Players Within Initial Small Groups (U-6/8/10)**
- **Rotate One Team Between Games (U-8/10)**
- **Reshuffle Every Player Between Games (U/10)**

Basic "Play Day" Logistics

Competitions with Scoring Systems

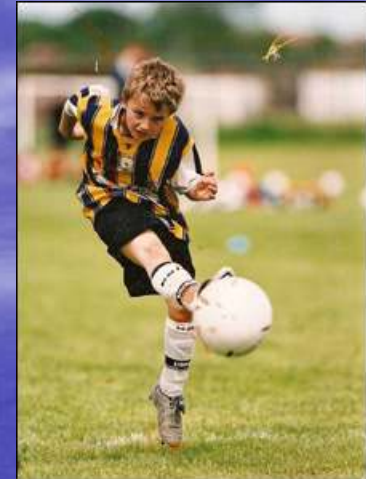
- Individual Competition (Reshuffle teams after every round)
- Random Team Competition (Maintain initial teams)
- Pre-Assigned Team Competition (Balanced teams by ability)
- Tiered Competition (Better / Weaker players pre-assigned)
- Co-Ed Competition (U-6/8/10)
- Scoring System
 - Win = 3 points
 - Tie = 1 point
 - Team Goals = 1 point (U-10)
 - Shut-Outs = 1 Point (U-10)



Basic "Play Day" Logistics

Incorporating Skill Practices

- Stations
 - 1v1 / 2v2 / 3v3 Competitions
 - Keep-a-Way Games (ball control / dribbling)
 - Disguised as "fun" games for U-6/8
 - Tagging and Chasing Games (agility / dribbling)
 - Stop and Start Games (ball control / dribbling)
 - Gates Games (passing / dribbling)
 - Juggling-Related Activities (U-10)
 - Relay Activities (dribbling and turning)
 - Free Play

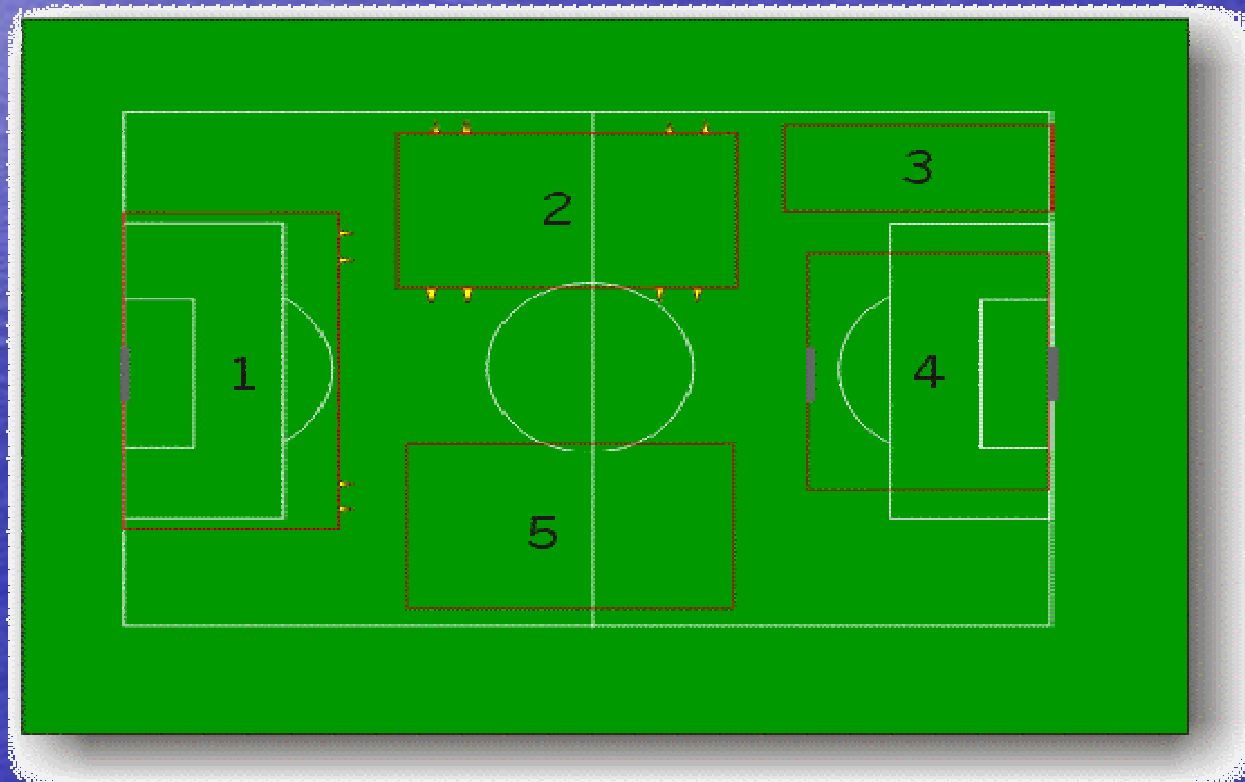


Advanced "Play Day" Logistics

Getting Creative

Multiple Game Formats (U-8/10)

Rotate Intact Groups Between Games



Advanced "Play Day" Logistics

Getting Creative

Multiple Game Formats (U-8/10)

Big and Small Goal Game (~30 x ~40 yards)

- Attack one goal with a goalkeeper
- Defend two small goals on the outsides
- Change ends at "half-time"



Advanced "Play Day" Logistics

Getting Creative

Multiple Game Formats (U-8/10)

Four (or Six) Goal Game (~40 x ~30 yards)

- Pass through any of the opponent's goals to score



Advanced "Play Day" Logistics

Getting Creative

Multiple Game Formats (U-8/10)

Counter-Attack Game (~40 x ~20 yards)

- Long and narrow field
- Pass through the goal to score



Advanced "Play Day" Logistics

Getting Creative

Multiple Game Formats (U-8/10)

Shooting Game (~30 x ~25 yards)

- Goals and goalkeepers at each end
- Short field



Advanced "Play Day" Logistics

Getting Creative

Multiple Game Formats (U-8/10)

Line Soccer (~35 x ~25 yards)

- Entire long line is the goal
- Dribble across the line to score



"Young players need freedom of expression to develop as creative players...they should be encouraged to try skills without fear of failure"

Arsene Wenger

Best Practices for the Youth Academy Model



HEATHCLIFF O'MALLEY

Youth Academy Best Practices



Moving The Base

Organizations Practice Automatic And Universal Advancement From U-8 To U-9 And Excludes Formal Competition Before U-10

Youth Academy Best Practices



The Organization Provides Parent Education Programs, including.....

- A Signed Code of Conduct (annual)**
- On-Going Parent Education (semi-annual)**
 - ❖ The Player Development Process**
 - ❖ Soccer Strategy and Tactics Explained**
 - ❖ Laws of the Game**
 - ❖ The Impact of Practicing Sideline Psychology**

Youth Academy Best Practices



Scheduling Play Days

Game Day Matches Scheduled by...

- ❖ **Availability of Playing Venues**
- ❖ **Number Of Fields Available At Playing Venues**
- ❖ **Number Of Players In Each Organization**
- ❖ **Time Available for Play**

Youth Academy Best Practices



Expectations for Youth Academy Coaches

- **Attain Age-Appropriate Coaching Certification**
- **Seek Advanced Coaching Education**
 - ❖ **USSF Licenses**
 - ❖ **National Youth License**
- **Participate in Continuing Education**
- **Apply Developmentally Sound Practices**
- **Model High Ethical Standards**
- **Practice Common Sense Game Management**

Youth Academy Best Practices

Common Sense Game Management

**When The Score In A Youth Academy Game Becomes Lopsided,
Good Coaches Solve The Problem By.... .**

- ✓ Adding A Player(s) To The Losing Team**
- ✓ Moving The Impact Player(s) To Another Game**
- ✓ Changing An Impact Player With The Goalkeeper**
- ✓ Playing For The Losing Team As The Goalkeeper**
- ✓ Removing A Player From The Winning Team**
- ✓ All Of The Above!**

**Youth-Centered Coaches Find Ways To Make Each Game
Competitive And Therefore Fun For The Players.**

No-one Enjoys A One-Sided Soccer Game.

Youth Academy Best Practices

Boys and Girls

- ✓ **Capable and Motivated Girls Play With Boys**
- ✓ **Competitive Girl's Teams Play in Boy's Divisions**
- ✓ **Train Girls and Boys Together**



Youth Academy Best Practices



Game Officials

- ❖ **No Officials Necessary**
- ❖ **Players (U-9+) and Coaches**
- ❖ **The Youth Academy Model can be an Excellent Training Ground for Young Referees**

Youth Academy Best Practices



Two-Year Age-Grouping (U-6 / U-8 / U-10 / U-12)

- More Flexibility In Playing And Training Opportunities.
- Can Accommodate More Effective Player Tiering
- Creates An Environment Where Younger Players Learn From Older Club-Mates Before Assuming Leadership Roles.

**Youth Academy
Best Practices**



**Festival Play (U-9)
and
Tournament Play (U-10+)**

- Encouraged
- Recommended Number Of Seasonal Events:
Two (Maximum)

Youth Academy Best Practices



The Club Pass System

- **Sign Players To An Organization, Not A Team**
- **One Pass Card Per Player**
- **Players Compete For Any Age-Appropriate Team Within their Organization**
- **Playing Down Issues (late developers)**

Youth Academy Best Practices



Building in Bases of 40 (Minimum)

A Base of 40 Players at U-9....

- Seeks To Ensure Two Teams At U-13**
- Provides For Training Versatility**
- Provides Internal Competition For Places**
- Allows The Organization to Ability-Place Groups In Appropriate Competitions**

Youth Academy Best Practices



Balanced (B-B-B) versus Tiered (A-B-C) Tournament Rosters

- Number of Players?**
- Degree of Homogeneity?**
- Age Effect Issues**
- Maturation Issues: U-9/10's versus U-11/12's**
- Positive Use Of Club Pass System**

Youth Academy Best Practices



Training Frequency

10,000 Hour Rule

- Training to Games Ratio
- Homework Assignments For Improved Technical Development

"A touch is a touch, even a bad one."

Bert-Jan Heijmans - dutchUK football school

Youth Academy Best Practices



Training Schedule

Sample Training Model

- ❖ **Mondays and Wednesdays: U-9's and U-11's
Optional Training Opportunities for
Motivated U-10's and U-12's**
- ❖ **Tuesdays and Thursdays: U-10's and U-12's
Optional Training Opportunities for
Motivated U-9's and U-11's**

Youth Academy Best Practices

Player Assessment



State-Wide Player Evaluation Process

- Semi-Annual Parent/Player Meetings
- Common Assessment Form
 - ❖ **Technical Speed:** The ability to settle the ball and dribble, pass, or shoot.
 - ❖ **Tactical Speed:** The ability to read the game and make decisions.
 - ❖ **Soccer Speed:** The ability to move in response to the game.
 - ❖ **Personality:** The individual qualities a player brings to the game.

Ohio North Youth Academy Programs

Akron Metro
Avon
Avon Lake
Bay Village
Brad Friedel's PSA
Brecksville
Nardon Hills
North Ridgeville
OYSAN State League
Perrysburg
Westlake



Add your organization here _____

"Kids football is all about the individual loving the game: dribbling and shooting, playing games and scoring goals, experimenting and copying. It is very simple and lots of fun. Adult football is all about the team and results. It is physical, tactical, complicated and very serious."

Tom Statham - Manchester United Academy



**Youth Academy
Best Practices**

**Ethical Standards for
Youth Academy Coaches**



Definition

Ethics Are The Standards Of Conduct And Moral Behavior Specific To An Organization. The Following Statements Refer To The Ethical Standards Expected From Academy Coaches And Those Involved In Educating Young Children As Members Of OYSAN, US Youth Soccer, and US Soccer.

Youth Academy Best Practices



Ethical Standards for Youth Academy Coaches

- ❖ **Ethics With Regard To Coaching For “Process” Versus “Product”:** Coaches Who Place The Outcome Of Games Ahead Of The Ongoing Needs Of The Participants Are Being Unethical.
- ❖ **Ethics With Regard To Soccer Rules:** Coaches Who Bait, Antagonize, Or Otherwise Challenge The Decisions Of The Officials Are Being Unethical.

Youth Academy Best Practices



Ethical Standards for Youth Academy Coaches

- ❖ **Ethics With Regard To Playing Time:** Coaches Who Play Only Their Better Players In An Attempt To Win Games, And Those Who Do Not Provide Young Players With Equal Playing Time, Or Adequate Rest, Are Being Unethical.
- ❖ **Ethics With Regard To Positioning:** Coaches Who Restrict The Movement Of Players In Small-sided Games In Order To Affect The Outcome Are Being Unethical. Coaches Who Rigidly Organize Players Into Formal Positions To Artificially Separate Them Are Guilty Of Over-Coaching.

Youth Academy Best Practice



Ethical Standards for Youth Academy Coaches

- ❖ **Ethics With Regard To Blowouts: Coaches Who Deliberately Run Up Scores Are Being Unethical.**
- ❖ **Ethics With Regard To Player Advancement: The Coach Who Seeks To Retain A Player(s) Who Has Outgrown The Knowledge And Abilities Of The Coach For The Implicit Or Explicit Purpose Of Winning Games Is Being Unethical.**

Youth Academy Best Practices



Ethical Standards for Youth Academy Coaches

- ❖ **Ethics With Regard To Game Tactics:** Coaches Who Use Negative Tactics And Minimize The Enjoyment Of The Players In Order To Win Games Are Being Unethical.
- ❖ **Ethics With Regard To Recruiting:** Coaches Who Routinely Recruit Players From Other Organizations As A Shortcut To Developing From Within Are Being Unethical.

Youth Academy Best Practices

Ethical Standards for Youth Academy Coaches

❖ Ethics With Regard To Respecting The Game

Soccer has been played worldwide in one form or another for over 4500 years, and in the United States since 1869. Over six million American children now play youth soccer. The first official soccer rules were codified in London, England in 1863 and the FIFA World Cup is the world's largest single sport event.

It is the responsibility of each coach to demonstrate respect for the game by honoring players, spectators and officials, and by promoting positive character development to all young players in words and deeds. Coaches who fail to meet these standards by displaying poor sportsmanship and overreacting to the natural ups and downs of the game are being unethical.



**For More Information
Contact US Youth Soccer's
Ohio North Affiliate (OYSAN)**

at

(330) 659-0989

<http://www.oysan.org/Coaches/coachingarticles.htm>

**Tom Turner
Director of Coaching and Player Development
Coaching@oysan.org**





Good Luck!

