

Hollister Tremors: Player Development/Training Priorities

Teach tactics only after the players have perfected their basic technique!

Players need to learn technique before tactics. Specific technique and tactics tend to be age and experience related – players need a certain level of physiological and psychological development and maturity before they are ready for certain tasks. If they can't pass the ball accurately over 10 yards (or 20 yards, or 30 yards, etc.), or control such a pass, then what tactics are they ready for?

Correct fundamentals of technique and tactics are essential – it's much harder to “untrain” bad habits! Unfortunately, the beginning players are often being coached by well-meaning parents who do not understand the fundamentals. Parents new to the sport and/or youth coaching need to be given all the support possible to understand what is required of them.

Player Development Model

Recreation

U6: Understand that Kicking is Not a Soccer Skill – see appendix.

The emphasis is on encouragement, reward and desire to play. Their first experience of “soccer”.

NO TACTICS!

- One player, one ball!
- Lots (and lots) of touches on the ball.
- Dribbling! Get out of trouble!
- Soft first touch! (Getting the ball under control)
- 1 v 1 in an environment that emphasizes technique.
- 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 maximum – let them play!
- Expect the “swarm” – have no expectations about any tactical play!
- **HAVE FUN!**

Mentally:

Players are self conscious and have a limited attention span.

Told to play, lack self motivation.

They are easily bruised psychologically and need lots of praise.

Physically:

Players must be kept busy and active.

They fatigue easily, but recover quickly.

Coordination is very limited.

Competitive

U6: There should be no “competitive” club teams at this age group.

Recreation

U8: Introduction of **fundamentals of tactics:**
Attacking and defensive moves are taught depending on the loss or gain of the ball. Again, “Kicking is not a Soccer Skill”

Many players experiencing soccer for the first time, the emphasis is on encouragement, reward and desire to play.

- Attacking vs. Defending: 1 v 1.
- Dribbling with the ball to beat an opponent.
- Winning the ball back.
- Soft first touch/control.
- Introduce passing only for those players ready for it.
- Player’s options: Dribble, Pass or Shoot!
- Play lots of 4 v 4.
- **KEEP IT FUN!**

Mentally:

Players are still self conscious and have a limited attention span.
Often easily bruised psychologically and still need lots of praise.

Physically:

Players must be kept busy and active.
They fatigue easily, but recover quickly.
Coordination is improving.

U10: Typically where the differentiation between “Rec” and “Comp” players begins. There can still be many players who are new to the game, and coaching can be complicated with a wide diversity of skills and experience in the players.

Ideally, when numbers are sufficient, players can be separated depending on ability into “A” and “B” teams.

As for training priorities, it will depend upon the player’s soccer experience – anything from rec U6 to comp U10. Avoid playing 11 v 11 as much as possible. 7 v 7 on a smaller field would be a much better format for the players’ physical abilities.

Competitive

U8: There should be no “competitive” club teams at this age group. Parents are not helping their children by putting competitive pressure on them at this age.

U10: Introduction of “comp” teams usually via a selection process. Who is the primary motivator – parent or player? Consequently a coach may often be dealing with players who may not really be ready for comp play.

At this stage, improved first attacker and first defender tactical behavior is expected, with the concept of “transition” being introduced - the immediate change from attack to defense depending on ball possession. The main tactical guideline is to score and to prevent goals. “Stationary” tactics become a part of team play.

- Passing, receiving, dribbling and shooting.
- Introduce heading.
- First Attacker
- First Defender
- 1 v 1 through 4 v 4

Recreation (U10 cont.)

KEEP IT FUN! Some players will never want to go beyond “Rec” play – give them that option, and keep them coming back year after year!

U12: Skills acquired at the lower ages enable a rough classification of the young player – “rec” vs “comp”.

This is a key age-group – soon they will be old enough to decide for themselves if they want to continue playing organized soccer. Creating a love of the game is essential. Overbearing coaches and/or parents in rec soccer can drive kids away from the game!

KEEP IT FUN! Due to players’ smaller physical stature, compared to adults, it is still better to play 9 v 9 on a smaller field for this age group.

Competitive (U10 cont.)

Mentally:

Players begin to develop a sense of team loyalty. Parents are usually still the prime motivator. More self motivation, some players showing greater competitiveness. Psychologically stronger. Encourage players to explore the limits of their ability, to express themselves, and gain the confidence to try the unpredictable.

Physically:

Balance and coordination improving. Increasing attention span.

Ideally play 7 v 7 (or 9 v 9 max) on proportionally smaller fields. 11 v 11 on a full size field will not help their game!

U12: Skills acquired at the lower ages enable a rough classification of the young player – “rec” vs “comp”. Skill is acquired through spontaneous practice and subsequent specialization. With these skills the player must now be in a position to adapt to varying situations in the game.

- First and Second Attacker - combination play – wall pass, give and go, takeover.
- First and Second Defender – “pressure” and “cover”.
- Movement off the ball – offensively and defensively.
- Transition
- Use of touch restrictions to enhance specific technical skills

Mentally:

Players have a sense of team loyalty. Peer pressure is becoming a factor. Players more competitive, wanting to play. Able to problem solve with team mates – concept of “team work”

Physically:

Development of speed and strength. Capable of performing complex skill sequences.

Realistically, players are still physically neither big enough, nor strong enough to play a full size 11 v 11 game. A 9 v 9 format is still very relevant to this age group.

Recreation

U14: The recreational program at the U14 and older levels is probably the least problematic and least controversial of all the age groups. Players by now have typically found their proper playing levels, are true fans of the game, playing for enjoyment and not taking things too seriously.

Often the biggest challenge is retaining enough players for regular 11 a side. Small sided games are a good alternative, including Futsal.

Coaches must make it FUN!

U16: See above.

Competitive

U14: Often considerable disparity in size and strength depending on onset of puberty. “Late bloomers” will need a lot of encouragement.

A difficult age to coach as players are changing dramatically, both physically and mentally. They are also looking to assert their independence.

Enhanced skills and awareness teach players that it is not always possible to move directly towards the opponent’s goal. He must try to impose his own tactics (positional) on the opponent, at the same time taking stock of environmental influences on the game and the field. Principles of man-to-man vs zonal marking become more evident during attack and defense. Positional specialization begins to appear as well as playing formations.

- Technical training by position (functional training)
- 1 v 1 – 8 v 8 games to develop group tactics – back/midfield/forward.
- Advanced combination play – overlap, third man running
- Possession games focusing on 1 and 2 touch play.

Mentally:

Peer pressure is a significant motivating factor. Puberty/hormone surges affect their thinking – often in a fashion frustrating to coaches and parents. Tendency to form social groups and cliques.

Physically:

Dramatic physical growth, sometimes with periods of poor coordination.

Strong focus on TRANSITION

Coordination training emphasizing agility and proper running technique.

Lots of 3 v 3, 4 v 4, 5 v 5.

U16: More than in previous age groups, the increases in competitiveness now requires dealing with attack and defense. The player will not always succeed in enforcing his tactics. Functional reactions to the opponents’ strategy become necessary. Positional tactics automatically lead to

Competitive (U16 cont.)

functional tactics. Self-criticism and self-analysis must gradually be encouraged.

Technique must be perfected and performed under pressure of an opponent and with restrictions of time and space.

Fitness/Power and speed of play increases dramatically.

- 1 v 1 – 11 v 11 games to develop team functions (attacking and defending) per zone and positional play.
- Advanced technique at speed.
- Numbers up and numbers down tactical games (eg 6 v 4, 11 v 7)
- Players coaching each other in games.
- Defending as a team.
- TRANSITION!

Mentally:

Players in psychic stage of puberty, becoming more set in their ways.

Players starting to discover their own personalities.
Makes a personal decision to play and at what level.

Physically:

Muscle development becomes important.

Coordination training with an emphasis on strength and power.