

PCSL

PRAIRIE CITIES SOCCER LEAGUE



INSIDE:

- How to support your child and coach.
- What to expect during your child's development.
- Learn about the club's approach to player development



PRAIRIE CITIES SOCCER LEAGUE, IL PARENT'S MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION BY PCSL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

On behalf of the Prairie Cities Soccer League Board of Directors thank you for being a PCSL parent!

PCSL is a place where every child plays in an atmosphere of good sportsmanship and positive coaching. In addition to soccer skills, tactics, and the physical aspects of soccer, we recognize and prioritize the psychosocial needs of all youth and work toward the fulfillment of those needs in all that we do.

This Parent Manual provides a summary of the PCSL Player Development Curriculum - drawn from the expertise of the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) and SoccerPlus along with nationally licensed coaches within our community. The coaching methods and skills reflect research and experience from our national soccer organizations and coaches from all over the world. Our goal is to have all PCSL coaches use this model of long term player development which has a natural alignment with the United States Soccer Curriculum's four main areas of focus: the importance of player development over winning, quality training sessions (practices), ability and age-appropriate training sessions, and the nurturing of a fun and inspiring environment for all players.

We understand there are as many methods of coaching as there are coaches in our organization, but without a curriculum, coaching becomes disjointed and lacks continuity. All of you with coaching experience understand that what you taught players last year may not be the same skills and techniques new players to your team have learned previously. The curriculum is designed to take the guesswork out of what you will be teaching and provide the necessary framework for player development, allowing you to relax and focus on your own personality and style of coaching.



To that end, coaching workshops, clinics, and online activities will be offered throughout the year. For new coaches, the curriculum will provide a “manual” of coaching and make it easy for you to plan your practices.

On behalf of the entire PCSL organization, thank you for volunteering your time and efforts to make soccer a fun and exciting experience for our youth.

PCSL PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MISSION STATEMENT

It is our mission as a nonprofit organization to cultivate the physical, mental, and emotional growth and development of youth through the sport of soccer at all levels of age and ability.

OUR AIMS

- Use a model of Long Term Athletic Development for our players aged 4 to 18, to ensure they are taught in an age appropriate manner and maximize their development potential.
- For players and coaches, establish a set of High Quality Standards which ensure individual player development is occurring. As an organization efficiently communicate our standards to our coaches, players, and parents.
- We are committed to teach and develop volunteer coaches to the highest level through a quality instructional program, and we will provide excellent coaching to all members of our club in equal opportunity.
- We seek to expand soccer opportunities to areas that are traditionally underserved.

OUR MISSION FURTHER DEFINED

- Long Term Athletic Development: we understand the rate of cognitive, social, physical, and intellectual development within each child varies greatly from one to the next. Our mission is to provide each child the opportunity to be challenged at a developmentally appropriate soccer level.
- High Quality Standards: One of our most important goals is to challenge each player individually to play the game at a higher level. By having high standards of professionalism and developmentally appropriate benchmarks, we will ensure player development does occur.
- Excellent Coaching: quite simply, great players result from great coaches. We realize that to improve the quality of our players we need to have excellent coaches

who can guide and mentor young players along their journey of soccer and athletic development. The coaches will use a positive approach when coaching and demonstrate good sportsmanship.



DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The SoccerPlus Long Term Player Development Model is a soccer adaptation of the Long Term Athletic Development Model created by Dr. Istvan Bayli. Originally a model for Elite Athlete Development, the model provides a process for development from early childhood through retirement.

THEORY OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

The SoccerPlus approach emphasizes development-appropriate skill acquisition to maximize the player's potential. The supporting theory supports ever more complex and demanding conditions placed on the player as they advance through several stages of development, which include prepuberty, puberty, post-puberty and maturation. In addition to physical transformations, the model also accounts for changes in emotional and cognitive development, factors having a dramatic effect on the capacity of players to learn and perform.

Significant developmental differences also exist between children of the same gender and same age. To this end SoccerPlus model supports the adage – “if you are good enough ... you are old enough”. It is extremely important to offer programming flexibility to enable each child to find their training and performance level. This perspective should not only apply to ‘playing-up’, but also to placing players ‘down’. Our focus must always be on what is best for the child – a decision involving a number of variables.

CURRICULUM

The term ‘Curriculum’ is most commonly associated with teaching and school education. In general terms, an educational curriculum consists of everything that promotes intellectual, personal, social, and physical development of the participants. When transferred to sport, the term curriculum is usually related to a book of activities and games organized in such a way to aid the coach plan for a practice session. Rarely do these curriculum books engage the reader in a rationale for selecting such activities, or describe how coaching methodology is as important as the activities themselves. Unfortunately this approach usually leads to very low adherence by the coaches – particularly if subsequent coaching sessions do not realize the outcomes suggested in the text.

Activities and session plans are important, but should be selected to realize the outcomes of the program. A club's Player Development Curriculum details the framework, aims, objectives and content and helps to raise standards, performance, and expectations. A curriculum should include approaches to teaching, learning, assessment, and focuses on the quality of relationships between coach, players and parents.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

Children entering soccer at aged 4, 5 or 6 will start a ‘journey’ that should have a clearly defined beginning, middle and end, including multiple assessment points and learning experiences. Some players and parents will choose to end the journey early, but for others

‘Developmentally Appropriate Coaching’ is a concept the majority of coaches agree with, but few implement. In simple terms, developmentally appropriate coaching offers players the opportunity to play with and against children of similar ability - age is not as important as skill, technique and physical attributes. It is easier to keep the children within their age group and requires considerably less explanation. Moving fully to developmental coaching would be a significant departure from the norm and would be in conflict with the competitive landscape that exists in youth soccer.

FIGURE 1: SOCCERPLUS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MODEL

		SOCCERPLUS FIVE-STAGE DEVELOPMENT MODEL																
		0-2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Age (in years)	Balyi LTAD Model	Active Start					Fundamentals			Learning to Train			Training to Train			Training to Compete		
SoccerPlus stages		PLUS 1					PLUS 2			PLUS 3			PLUS 4			PLUS 5		
Age Group		U5-U6					U7-U9			U10-U12			U13-U15			U16-U18		
Soccer Age (Developmental)		2 years +/-					2 years +/-			2 years +/-			2 years +/-			2 years +/-		
Coaching Time (year)		40-90 hours					100-200 hours			150-320 hours			150-360 hours			150-540 hours		
Developmental Focus		1. Social 2. Physical 3. Technical 4. Psychological 5. Tactical					1. Technical 2. Social 3. Physical 4. Tactical 5. Psychological			1. Technical 2. Physical 3. Tactical 4. Psychological 5. Social			1. Technical 2. Tactical 3. Physical 4. Psychological 5. Social			1. Tactical 2. Psychological 3. Technical 4. Physical 5. Social		
Specialist Training		General					All Position Training			Specific Position Training			Groups & Units			Whole Team		
Players Per Session		12					12 to 15			15 to 18			18			22		
Length of Session		45-60 min					60-75 min			60-90 min			75-90 min			75-90 min		
Ratio Training:Games		Training					4:1			3:1			3:1			2:1		
Training Format		1v1 to 3v3					1v1 to 5v5			4v4 to 8v8			4v4 to 11v11			4v4 to 11v11		
Game Format		N/A					4v4 or 5v5			6v6 to 8v8			7v7 to 11v11			11v11		
Goalkeepers in games		No					5v5 only			Yes			Yes			Yes		
Player Assessment		2 per year					3 per year			4 per year			6 per year			8 per year		
Coach Assessment		2 per year					2 per year			2 per year			2 per year			2 per year		
Coach Certification		Youth Module					Youth Module			E License			D License			C License		

who aspire to play soccer into adulthood, the Player Development Model manages every step of the way. For many players and parents understanding the steps to success, expected outcomes and focus on education and training are extremely important factors. True Player Development provides such a pathway, building programs around principles that respect the developmental needs of all children.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

SoccerPlus has developed a five stage development model, a soccer adaptation of the Long Term Athletic Development Model created by Dr. Istvan Bayli (see Figure 1). Originally a model for Elite Athlete Development, the model provides a process for development from early childhood through retirement. Plus 1 (4 & 5 year old), Plus 2 (6-8), Plus 3 (9-11), Plus 4 (12-14) & Plus 5 (15-18). Each stage of the model promotes a different development focus – the interplay between physical, cognitive, emotional, psychological and social variables. For example, when working with four and five year old consider that players of this age tire easily, need repetition and reinforcement, have short attention span and mostly approach tasks individually.

In terms of soccer participation, we need to ensure the sessions are short, activities

change constantly, skills are demonstrated and continually reinforced and information needs to be camouflaged and concealed, such as using cartoon characters and creating a story for a particular activity. Importantly, every child should have a ball at their feet for the vast majority of time. Team play at this stage of development should be restricted to small sided games and one vs one situations. As players move into Stage 2 we start introducing passing and working cooperatively with teammates.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF CHILD

DEVELOPMENT

Physical and emotional changes that occur as people mature affect all aspects of life including sport. A child centered coach needs to understand the different phases of development and how they can affect sports performance – particularly coaches of young athletes. Coaches need to consider not only the players’ physical needs but also their social, emotional and cognitive needs. Adapting teaching methodology and content to meet the players’ needs significantly improves their progress in soccer. Training, competition, and recovery programs should be designed to match the physical, mental, cognitive and emotional development of each player.

FIGURE 2: PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM



5 STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

+PLUS 1™ 3-5 YEAR OLD PLAYERS



The introduction to soccer stage coincides with the onset of independence from parents and increased self confidence in most children. Children also start to begin to play cooperatively with others. This does not mean however parents should fully pass the responsibility for learning to the club coach. The parent has a very important role in encouraging the child to play at home. Practice sessions should occur once or twice per week and players should be encouraged to play multiple sports and activities.

Development Focus:

- Players should learn the fundamental movement skills of running (forwards, backwards and sideways), jumping, turning, twisting and bending (lowering center of gravity to form a solid base).
- The ball should be involved all the time.

+PLUS 2™ 6-8 YEAR OLD PLAYERS



A 6 year old is eager, active and likes to be on the go. Although keen to act independently, a 6 year old needs parental approval, understanding, praise and encouragement. Pushing too hard or expecting too much can result in the child becoming tense and nervous. An 8 year old is able to accept moderate responsibilities. Peer groups become important and the child will identify with other youngsters of the same sex and with similar interests and activities.

Development Focus:

- Movement skills and technical development remain top of the agenda in Stage 2.
- Small sided games and teamwork activities are introduced.
- Speed training commences for Girls (6-8 years) & Boys (7-9 years)
- Optimal time for training suppleness occurs for both Girls and Boys in stages 2 and 3 (6-10 years)

+PLUS 3™ 9-11 YEAR OLD PLAYERS



This is the beginning of pre-adolescence. Children begin to ‘spread out’ as their rate of development accelerates. Girls in particular start to physically mature quicker than boys and this growth surge can lead to awkward performance, particularly on tasks requiring fine motor movements. As friendships are developing and players are becoming more reliant on their peers it is important for team selection to be handled sensitively. The reason why so many athletes plateau during the later stages of their careers is primarily because of an overemphasis on competition instead of training during this important period in their development.

Development Focus:

- This is a crucial time for developing advanced competency in basic techniques and this platform allows for the introduction of more advanced skills.
- Some basic tactical appreciation can also be introduced.
- Commence aerobic capacity training at stage 3, prior to the adolescent growth spurt, also known as Peak Height Velocity.
- Aerobic power should be introduced progressively after growth rate decelerates.
- It is also very important that children are encouraged to take part in unstructured play and other sport participation is encouraged.

+PLUS 4™ 12-14 YEAR OLD PLAYERS

Dramatic physical changes are the hallmark of adolescence. Late stage 3 and early stage 4, there will be noticeable differences occurring in the growth of girls in comparison to boys. Girls (12 years) generally experience peak growth approximately two years ahead of boys (14 years). Since many young adolescents are unaware that the onset and rate of puberty vary greatly, they need reassurance that their own growth and development are normal, and they will benefit from learning about the progression of physiological changes. Most 12-year-olds focus on social life, friends and school and they continue friendships with members of the same sex. Coaches must be sensitive to close friendships when selecting teams and generally working with children in stage 4 – emotional changes can enhance sensitivity and lead to conflicts between players and between players and adults.

Development Focus:

- On average, girls reach PHV in Stage 4. Aerobic power should be introduced progressively after growth rate decelerates.
- Continue to consolidate the performance of fundamental and advanced individual skills.
- Players should receive more in-depth tactical instructions, particularly in understanding playing positions. Players should continue to experience different positions on the field.
- Optimum time for the introduction of Strength training for girls (immediately following PHV)
- A second speed training window opens for girls (11-13 years)
- The second speed training window opens for boys (13-16 years)
- Players should play other sports, but soccer should become the primary sport during the soccer season for the serious and committed player.

+PLUS 5™ 15-18 YEAR OLD PLAYERS

During middle adolescence, puberty is well underway, and is complete in many teenagers. There is a decreased preoccupation with the body and an increased involvement with peers. Parental conflicts develop over independence, since the peer group often serves as the adolescent's reference for their standards of behavior. By the age of 16, most girls have completed the changes associated with puberty and most boys are well on their way to finishing pubertal development, having gained muscle mass and strength. If players in stage five have received appropriate coaching in stages 1-4, they will be ready to perform competently in game situations.

Development Focus:

- Team tactics should form a significant part of practice sessions and teams should be coached in team 'units' – defense, midfield and attack.
- Position training is important, and players should be prepared for a primary position.
- Physical conditioning is also important for all players and training should be tailored to the physical demands of their position on the field.
- On average, boys reach PHV in Stage 5. Aerobic power should be introduced progressively after growth rate decelerates.
- Optimum time for the introduction of Strength training for boys (1-1 ½ years following PHV)
- The second speed training window opens for boys (13-16 years)
- Participation in other sports can enhance physical preparation and transferability to soccer. However, soccer should be the primary sport for serious and committed players.

10 WAYS PARENTS CAN SUPPORT THEIR CHILD

1. Focus on learning not on game results!
– This program is designed to give every player the chance to be a ‘winner’. Winning is putting forth effort to learn, becoming more skilled and achieving personal improvement goals.
2. Support the coach – Coaches are working to a new plan and new expectations and parents should become familiar with the program and understand the coach’s aims and objectives. Stay to watch practices occasionally to see how the coach is working with your child and the team and note the skills the coach is encouraging players to perform.
3. Positive reinforcement promotes self esteem and character - Parents should have a major role in shaping the child’s sport experiences by discussing their own and others behavior. Children should understand that it is not right to cheat or gain a competitive advantage by infringing the rules or the ‘spirit’ of the game. Equally parents should exhibit positive modeling behaviors at all times and this includes behavior on the sidelines and in particular how they deal with call made by the game officials and behavior of the opposition.
4. Understand your child and their development – There is a significant distinction between chronological age (days and years since birth) and development age (the degree of physical, mental, cognitive, and emotional maturity). The development age of the player is of primary importance to the successful implementation of the Player Development Curriculum.
5. Learn the game with your child – Take the first step – identify one live or televised game a week to watch together. Knowing the rules of the game will certainly help you enjoy watching the game and probably make a difference in supporting your child’s understanding. US Youth Soccer has several resources available - www.usyouthsoccer.org
6. Practice with your child – 10-15 minutes of practice a day – one ball one child – will make a major difference to a child’s skill and confidence. You don’t have to be a good player as a parent to get involved.
7. Get involved – Youth sports is only possible through the good will and dedication of parent volunteers. Coaching is just one of many roles parents can perform to assist the club grow and develop and to ensure the playing experience is as good as it can be.
8. Healthy habits - Ensuring players have the opportunity to recover physically and mentally after a practice/game is essential. In general terms, one day of full rest should precede and follow each practice or game.
9. Encourage multiple activities - Players should be permitted to play a variety of sports for as long as possible, until such times as the player decides to commit more fully to soccer. Playing soccer 3-5 nights per week for a 7 year old child is too much. It is however recommended players have the opportunity to participate year round – developing their competencies in movement and fundamental ball skills.
10. Encourage your child to give back – One way in which teenage players can ‘give back’ is to coach or referee. Under the supervision of an adult, a ‘Junior’ coach can gain school credit (volunteerism), gain valuable teaching/coaching experience, add to their resume and in some cases get sponsored to attend coaching awards.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: DAVID NEWBERY

For over 20 years David has studied and worked in youth education, soccer development and coaching. A former University Professor and CEO of a Youth Sports Company, David has been fortunate to travel extensively in the USA, meeting with coaches and club officials and learning about their approach to player development and coaching. Experiences from hundreds of clubs have afforded him the opportunity to support and guide youth soccer organizations, endeavouring to develop an educationally sound environment for players, coaches and parents.

In 2008, David created the Youth Soccer Assessment Tool (Y-SAT) to evaluate the performance of youth soccer clubs. Having research over 80 youth programs in 4 years, David was appointed to lead a national project to raise club performance standards and awareness of player development principles. In 2012, David became the Coordinator of the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) Club Standards Project.

MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

The American youth soccer system certainly has some advantages over those I experienced growing up in England. Firstly, 'soccer experience' possessed by parents and volunteer coaches is in the most part limited and generally American coaches tend not to be self acclaimed experts - unlike many British parent coaches who believe passionate support of a professional team for twenty years, watching endless hours of games on TV and playing for the local pub team provides the grounding to be a good coach. A second positive factor is the financial support provided to the clubs by parents - a product of soccer in the USA being very much a middle class sport. It is rare to see clubs struggling to provide uniforms, equipment and professional support for players and teams. Thirdly, a significant percentage of towns provide facilities conducive to learning to play the game. Lastly, there are a number of professional organizations available to support volunteers.

Unfortunately time has not cured many of the educational issues identified since my



early playing and training experiences nearly 37 years ago. There is still over-emphasis on winning and competitive games and parents continue to embark on coaching assignments with little knowledge or support from the club. There is very little evidence of a player development curriculum. Too many 'town level' players are being enticed by high-priced premier programs offering little more structure than the recreational and town programs and assessing players is almost exclusively used for selection (and rejection) and not as a strategy to improve and learn.

With all this said, I'm delighted for the players, parents and coaches of Prairie Cities Soccer League. Prairie Cities Soccer League introduces a number of initiatives to offer every child and coach the best opportunity to be successful. These initiatives include the introduction of a long term player development curriculum (U4 to U18 years), in house coach education program, mentorship of volunteer coaches by professional educators and a player assessment process to provide players and parents with regular feedback and areas for development.

This is truly a program of learning - where every child, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to improve. The learning environment will be 'informed' - coaches will undergo a program of education to ensure they understand the stages of physical, emotional and cognitive development and also how to select activities suitable for the developmental stage of the children.