



GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY SOCCER

Active for Life Soccer Guide






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Mission Statement:

The ASA Technical Department seeks to promote personal development and well-being through the provision of soccer participation opportunities for all within Alberta. The sport of soccer provides a lifetime of opportunities for players, parents, coaches, officials and administrators: the ASA Technical Department seeks to provide guidance and support to all those wishing to embrace the sport that has become the World's Game.

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INTRODUCTION

The sport of Soccer has evolved to proudly boast itself as the World's Game. However in order for any sport to grow, it must provide a vibrant and active entry level of performance: The Grassroots of Sport.

The game of soccer has developed over the years and is presented in many different formats and name adaptations today. Some of these adaptations are for better and some a twist on an existing theme. This document aims to provide an insight and guidance on "The Alberta Way". A game plan to take the sport of soccer forward in Alberta for all those involved.

As the governing body for soccer in Alberta, ASA holds responsibility for developing and administrating the game at all levels. The technical coaching team has specific responsibility for nurturing the development of coach and player pathways.

Presented on the ASA website are a series of informational documents to support your understanding and development as a player, coach or parent/guardian supporter of grassroots soccer. The goal is to offer a series of practical informational documents to support your enjoyment and experience within soccer, without presenting a comprehensive digest of the rules and tactics etc. There are some obvious cross-overs between each of the documents, but feel free to browse and use these documents to support you understanding and the development of players coming into the sport.

This document will illustrate the opportunities that exist to enable the presented mission statement to be fulfilled. If there are any questions relating to the information provided here within or coach/player pathways please contact the technical team at Alberta Soccer.





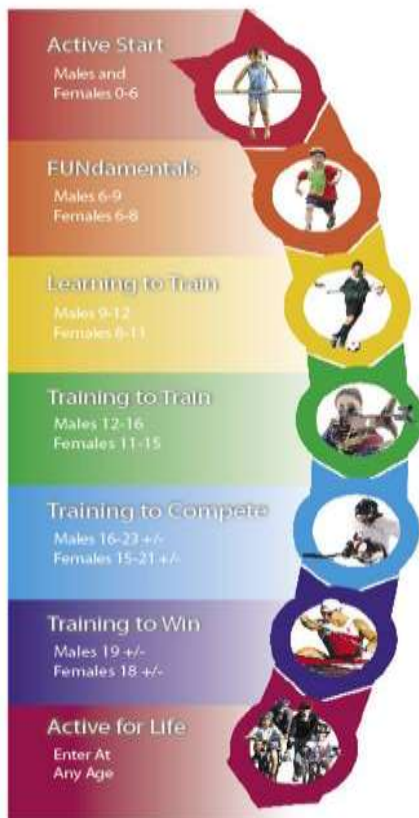
"THE ALBERTA WAY"

The principle objective of this document is to offer a standard guide to support the many players, parents, coaches and administrators that promote the game at a Grassroots level of participation. It is recognized that this entry level of participation is critical for the players and game as a whole, where all those introduced to the game may be offered the opportunity of nurturing a lifelong passion for the sport.

Therefore this guide should be used to promote a standardized program of play across Alberta, in the hope that when players from different clubs, associations, districts and regions of the Province come together; they have all been afforded the same opportunities and framework within which to participate. All current coach and player programs are being aligned with the Canadian Soccer Association model of Long Term Player Development. This is a framework that was developed by Sport Canada as Long Term Athlete Development and provides guidance to support children and adults in terms of their physical, tactical, technical and psychological development. For further information on the model of Long Term Player Development please visit:

www.canadasoccer.com/wellness-to-world-cup

7-Stages of LTAD



7-Stages of LTPD





STAGE 7 – ACTIVE FOR LIFE (>U14 FEMALE/MALE) Soccer Guide

Active for life is where every soccer player aspires to return. Whether players progress through the excellence stream or remain in grassroots soccer, it is hoped that they retain the passion and desire to pursue soccer as their sport of choice. Active for Life includes youth players from the U14 age group through to Masters’ competitions. This phase also encompasses the many different game formats, from 11 v 11 games, to beach soccer, futsal and the indoor game that is evident in Alberta.

THE GAME

This manual will focus on the outdoor game in terms of field requirements and coaching, but recognition in all game formats is that the coaching and playing should reflect the needs of the players’, their maturity and level/mode of competition. There are significant differences in some game formats and approaches and these should be acknowledged in supporting the game.

In addition to a variety of game formats are the reasons for playing soccer; some considerations for playing within the Active for Life stage are to be active, to socialize, to have fun, to compete or as a challenge for oneself. Some notable differences will also be related to gender, where females tend to present a more social focused appeal for the game and males are more task oriented. This is a generalisation as with a rise in competitive levels and stakes, there will be some female teams (College/AMSL teams) who will be as competitive in their outlook as male teams. Therefore the essence in supporting soccer within the Active for Life stage is to recognize why the players are pursuing a particular level of competition and ensure your coaching support reflects their desires.

TEAM SIZES

U13>	11 V 11 (includes goalkeeper)	12 Min - 20 Max	Community or Competitive
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FIELD SIZE

Age Group	Min Length	Min Width	Max Length	Max Width
U13>	90 metres	45 metres	120 metres	90 metres

GOAL SIZES

U13>	8 ft / 2.44m	24ft / 7.32m	None
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BALL SIZE

Players should use a regulation size five ball. These would be available through a reputable sports store.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE TIME

75-90 minutes of practice time.

There should be balanced game, practice and recovery periods throughout the season.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As indicated there are many game variations within Active for Life and as many reasons why the players continue to pursue their desire to play. A consideration for supporting players within this stage of development is to recognize the team or players' motive and support them from this perspective.

A further consideration of active involvement within the Active for Life Stage, is that this should not exclusively reflect playing the game. Soccer, as many sports, is promoted through a large volunteer base of coaches, officials, and administrators. Without such volunteers many players would not be afforded the opportunity to pursue the sport within a competitive or recreational environment. Therefore focus within this important stage should not be just towards playing the game, but also promoting the game to all within grassroots. Consider the experience and qualities you possess and seek opportunities to utilize these within the game. Could you become a coach to a junior team, or referee in a competitive league? There are many administrators needed to help promote the game through marketing, fund-raising, or tournament planning.

In essence the Active for Life stage is where all areas of the soccer community come together to grow the sport for future generations. The important consideration is to use the skills base you have and never over-reach your level of expertise to where the sport is at a detriment to you and itself. The game ultimately is about players, and players require support in order to play, not so volunteers may progress their career of sphere of influence.

It is also important to remember that Long Term Player Development is not necessarily a progressive route, some players may be entering or re-entering the sport within the Active for Life stage. They may have been introduced to a local recreational league as a way to keep fit and socialize, while other players may have pursued soccer within their childhood. This recognition supports the point that soccer is growing in Canada and drawing its appeal across all sectors of the community, and those who promote the game should recognise and support this.

PLAYERS PERSPECTIVE

Our quality of life is defined by how we choose to spend our leisure time. Whether this be reading, gardening or playing soccer. For many soccer players this maybe a weekly commitment of one game per week or a game and practice 3 times per week. The level of competition will also carry different demands on the players' commitment. The essence of commitment for any player is to ask why they choose to play soccer? This is a key consideration many athletes need to address, but will also provide them with the motive and desire to continue enjoying their participation or seek alternative avenues for their time.





Whatever rationale for playing the game, it is important that it is always pursued within the spirit of the game and soccer community. Whether a youth league or competitive master's league, the game is the essence of the player's week, but it should not be to the detriment of soccer, but a celebration of their week and an opportunity to challenge themselves fairly against other like-minded players. Therefore all support should be aimed at supporting this perspective of providing a fun and challenging environment within the spirit of the game.

COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

Coaching in Active for Life can be very rewarding, where there are many competitive leagues and opportunities for coaches to challenge their development against other teams. There also remain areas for skill development to be worked upon. As indicated there is a need to recognize why players are playing and matching the coach's expectations with the players.

Primary areas for technical coaching within this stage of development could be within older youth teams and female teams. Many female players may be entering or returning to the sport after family commitments and therefore seek the support and technical development aspect from coaching. While an adult competitive team may desire someone to take control and lead the team selections and direction of play in relation to tactics. There are lots of opportunities for coaches to develop and challenge their coaching ability. It is also true to say that although not every grassroots coach may aspire to become a professional coach, most professional coaches, would have started out within grassroots soccer at some level.

SESSION PLANS

In terms of coaching session plans it is important to recognize the level of competition and skill set the players possess. Practice times are recommended for between 75-90 minutes, this allows for elements of fitness, technical support and game related drills. Some adult teams demand a fitness component within the drills. A further option is for the technical drills to command a high tempo and need for fitness development. The social component of practice times is also important and should be built into any session. These are recreational teams and the players attend because they just want to play the game. Coaches should never forsake a game opportunity within a practice; it is what all players, regardless of age want to do: "play the game".

In developing a supportive session plan, look at the players and ensure the drills meet their needs and support their development. Some coaches seek to develop a session plan they may have observed another team/coach perform or gathered from the internet? There should be no one size fits all, and the skill of a coach is to deliver a session that meets the needs of your team and also reflects the competitive environment in which they compete.

