

# WELLNESS TO WORLD CUP

Presented by BMO



Canadian Soccer Association

## LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT



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## Supporting wellness through to World Cup excellence

### Canadian Soccer LTPD



The diagram shows how the LTPD model accommodates athletes at all levels of interest, ability and achievement. After children enter at the Active Start stage and become physically literate, they can continue on a pathway towards excellence or choose to enter an “Active for Life” recreational stream. The model promotes maximum player retention for both optimum wellness and sporting excellence.

## Growing the Beautiful Game

Soccer is the largest participation sport in Canada and the world, providing healthy physical activity for players at all levels of ability.

At the most basic level of participation, soccer promotes the integrated development and maintenance of the cardiovascular, musculoskeletal and neuromuscular systems. It helps in preventing many conditions and diseases (including heart disease, obesity, and osteoporosis) and enhances the well being of individuals across the nation.

At the high performance level, soccer is a vehicle for elite athlete achievement and hailed internationally as “The Beautiful Game.” It is played with finesse and skills that are difficult to master, and players progress through sequential stages of development to become “world class.”

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### Long-Term Player Development (LTPD)

LTPD is a program for soccer player development, training, competition, and recovery based on biological age (i.e. physical maturity) rather than chronological age. It is player centred, coach driven, and administration, sport science, and sponsor supported.<sup>1</sup>

#### LTPD:

- Eliminates gaps in the player development system.
- Guides planning for optimal athlete performance at all stages.
- Provides a framework for program alignment and integration, from volunteer club coaches to national and professional teams.
- Follows scientific principles and practical coaching experiences.

#### Benefits for players & parents:

- Better understanding of what makes a good soccer program.
- More players learning at their level and having fun.
- Appropriate game and league structures (e.g. size of balls, goals, field etc.).
- More opportunity for players to realize their athletic potential.
- More coaches who are knowledgeable in leading safe, effective practices.

#### Benefits for coaches & clubs:

- Information and education on effective coaching and practice methods.
- Guidelines for appropriate game structures.
- Guidelines on appropriate competition levels.
- Established pathways for player development for all levels of ability and ambition.
- Affirmation of best practices for coaches and club administrators.

#### Benefits for all:

- Competitive behaviour is fostered in players, while over-competitive behaviour is discouraged in adults (e.g. coaches and parents).
- Players, parents, coaches, and administrators understand that players are unique and therefore different in interest and aptitude.
- Players stay involved in the sport throughout their lives (as players, coaches, referees or club administrators).
- Soccer grows, and lifelong wellness is promoted for players of all ages, genders, and levels of ability and disability.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Canadian Sport for Life: Long-Term Athlete Development Resource Paper, Ottawa: Canadian Sport Centres, 2005. The complete document is available at [www.canadiansportlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportlife.ca)

# 1

## STAGE 1: Active Start

### U4-U6 Female and Male “FIRST KICKS”

Soccer contributes to the well-being of children by engaging them in the sport while teaching them basic movements. At this introductory level, the objective is to get moving and to keep active.

<b>Where:</b>	Home, daycare, schools, clubs, community, parks and recreation centres.
<b>Why:</b>	Provide early opportunities for children to learn basic soccer elements.
<b>Who:</b>	Technical leaders, parent coaches, parents, educators, caregivers.
<b>Coaching:</b>	Training in Physical Literacy (CSA Program).

- **Physical** – Provide the environment for learning proper fundamental movement skills such as running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing and catching.
- **Technical** – The player and the ball: Running with the ball, dribbling, controlling, kicking and shooting.
- **Tactical** – None.
- **Mental** – Fun, fascination, and passion for play.

#### Game Structure:

No competitive games – adult and child play together informally.

#### Recommended training times:

30 to 45 minutes.

#### Season Length:

4 to 16 weeks Winter/Spring/Summer, indoor and/or outdoor.

#### Recommendations:

- Player success is encouraged. While the adult should challenge the child player, they should allow the child to “score” goals and “beat” the adult opponent.
- Adult discontinues play when the child has lost interest.



#### Other Sports & Activities

Children should participate in many additional activities. Swimming and well-structured gymnastics programs are recommended.



## STAGE 2: FUNdamentals

U6-U8 Female and U6-U9 Male  
“FUN WITH THE BALL”

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At this stage, individual player development is paramount. Coaches and teachers should create a stimulating learning environment where the atmosphere is “Freedom and Fun.”

<b>Where:</b>	Home, schools, clubs.
<b>Why:</b>	Provide opportunities for children to learn basic soccer elements.
<b>Who:</b>	Physical education teacher, parent coach, team coach, club head coach.
<b>Coaching:</b>	Training in Physical Literacy (CSA Program).

- **Physical** – Develop the ABCs of movement: agility, balance, co-ordination and speed, as well as running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing and catching.
- **Technical** – Movement exercises/games designed to promote a feel for the ball: gaining ball control in receiving passes, dribbling, passing less than 25m, kicking the ball forward, and shooting on goal.
- **Tactical** – Small children are egocentric – playing the ball is the most important objective. However, they now need to be introduced to co-operation between players. They gain understanding of the game through playing situations.
- **Mental** – Basic awareness of environment to build game intelligence and decision making.

**Game Structure:** Ranges from 3v3 to 5v5.

				FIELD SIZES		GOAL SIZES no larger than
Game Format	Squad Size	Game duration	Ball Size	Min/Max width	Min/Max length	
3 v 3 *	Max 6	2 x 15 min.	3/4	18 to 22m	25 to 30m	5f/1.52m X 8f/2.44m
4 v 4 *	Max 8	2 x 15 min.	3/4	20 to 25m	30 to 36m	5f/1.52m X 8f/2.44m
5 v 5 *	Max 10	2 x 15 min.	3/4	25 to 30m	30 to 36m	5f/1.52m X 8f/2.44m

*\*With or without goalkeeper - when no goalkeeper, reduce the goal size.*

**Recommended training times:** 30 to 45 minutes.

**Season Length:** 12 to 20 weeks, indoor and/or outdoor.

### Recommendations:

- No league standings – jamboree format – emphasis is on FUN.
- Players and game formats are organized to support the basic playing experiences.
- All players play equal time and try all team positions, including goal keeping.
- Equal time should be allotted to practice and games.

### Other Sports & Activities

Children should participate in many additional activities. Swimming and well-structured gymnastics programs are recommended along with ball sports.



# 3

## STAGE 3: Learning to Train

### U8-U11 Female / U9-U12 Male

### “THE GOLDEN AGE OF LEARNING”

The effect of the role-model is very important at this stage. Children begin to identify with famous players and successful teams, and they want to learn imaginative skills. Skill demonstration is very important, and the players learn best by “doing.” Players move from self-centered to self-critical, and they have a high stimulation level during basic skills training.

This is also an important time to teach basic principles of play and to establish a training ethic and discipline. Repetitions are important to develop technical excellence, but creating a fun and challenging environment is still essential for stimulating learning.

**Where:** Clubs, district/regional development centers, schools.  
**Why:** Player development and talent identification.  
**Who:** Coaches, technical leaders, physical education teachers.  
**Coaching:** Training in Physical Literacy (CSA Program).

- **Physical** – This is an optimal window for trainability of speed, flexibility and skills.
- **Technical** – Building a greater repertoire of soccer related movements; technical skills are developed in training and within the context of basic soccer games.
- **Tactical** – Developing environment awareness and encouraging decision making: simple combinations, marking and running into space.
- **Mental** – Golden age of learning; intrinsic motivation is developed by the Fun and Enjoyment that foster desire to play; imagination, creativity, increased demands, discipline.



**Game Structure:** Ranges from 6v6 to 8v8.

				FIELD SIZES		GOAL SIZES no larger than
Game Format	Squad Size	Game duration	Ball Size	Min/Max width	Min/Max length	
6 v 6	Ideal 8/Max 10	2 x 25 min.	3/4	30 to 36m	40 to 55m	6f/1.83m X 14f/4.27m
7 v 7	Ideal 9/Max 12	2 x 25 min.	4	30 to 36m	40 to 55m	6f/1.83m X 16f/4.88m
8 v 8	Ideal 11/Max 14	2 x 30 min.	4	42 to 55m	60 to 75m	6f/1.83m X 18f/5.49m

**Recommended training times:** 45 to 70 minutes.

**Season Length:** 16 to 20 weeks, indoor and/or outdoor.

**Recommendations:**

- Small leagues provide game fixtures, but no league standings are recorded.
- Players and game formats are organized to support the basic playing experiences.
- All players play equal time and try all team positions, including goal keeping.
- The game structure progresses between ages from simple to more complex.
- The training to competition ratio should be 2 to 3 training sessions for every game.

### Other Sports & Activities

Other sports continue to play a role, both for variety and cross-training, but the balance now begins to shift firmly in favour of soccer.



# STAGE 4: Training to Train

## U11-U15 Female / U12-U16 Male

### “IDENTIFYING THE ELITE PLAYER”

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At this stage, elite soccer groups express interest in recruiting talented youth players. Care must be taken to recognize and protect the long-term interests of each player. Risks and issues can be avoided by ensuring that the development model remains “player centred.”

The optimal window of trainability for stamina begins with the onset of Peak Height Velocity (PHV), more commonly known as the adolescent growth spurt. The demands of skill training as well as training loads should increase, thus provoking improvement in mental toughness, concentration and diligence. Awareness of tactics within the game becomes an important facet of the learning process. Players tend to be self-critical and rebellious, but they have a strong commitment to the team.

<b>Where:</b>	Sports Schools, select programs (regional, provincial, national), NTC, Clubs, Sport schools.
<b>Why:</b>	Player development, talent identification and talent development.
<b>Who:</b>	Club head coaches & team coaches, Provincial & National team coaches.
<b>Coaching:</b>	CSA B Preparatory License, Provincial B License, National B and A License.

- **Physical** – Flexibility, disciplined warm-up and cool-down, agility, aerobic and anaerobic endurance, strength, core strength and stability, balance, nutrition and proper diet (pre-game, post-game, tournaments), prevention and care of injuries, importance of rest/recovery. Personalized programs needed in order to respect the growth spurt.
- **Technical** – Introduction of advanced techniques to those who are capable; technical acquisition in a more complex environment and position-specific skills.
- **Tactical** – Team work: development of tasks per unit (defensive, midfield or forward unit) and positional awareness through small-sided games and competitive matches.
- **Mental** – Pre-competition routine, introduction to mental preparation, goal setting, coping with winning and losing.

### Game Structure:

				FIELD SIZES		GOAL SIZES no larger than
Game Format	Squad Size	Game duration	Ball Size	Min/Max width	Min/Max length	
8 v 8	Ideal 11/Max 14	2 x 30 min.	4	42 to 55m	60 to 75m	6f/1.83m X 18f/5.49m
9 v 9	Ideal 12/Max 16	2 x 35 min.	4/5	42 to 55m	60 to 75m	6f/1.83m X 18f/5.49m
11 v 11	Ideal 16/Max 18	2 x 35 min.	5	FIFA reg.	FIFA reg.	8f/2.44m X 24f/7.32m

The Canadian Soccer Association highly recommends that no 11 a-side soccer be played before U13.

**Recommended training times:** 60 to 75 minutes.

**Season Length:** As players progress through this stage, they move towards year-round play that includes appropriate rest and recovery periods.

### Recommendations:

- Appropriate ratio of training, competition and rest throughout the year; periodized planning is critical.
- Training to competition ratio should be between 5 to 12 for every game.
- First experience in the select programs: regional, provincial and national.

### Other Sports & Activities

Soccer is the primary sport, but complimentary sports are encouraged which support movement and athleticism suitable for soccer (e.g. track & field).

# 5

## STAGE 5: Training to Compete

U15-U19 Female / U16-U20 Male

### “DEVELOPING THE INTERNATIONAL PLAYER”

Athletes who are now proficient at performing basic and soccer-specific skills are working to gain more game maturity as they learn to perform these skills under a variety of competitive conditions.

Fulfillment of each player’s potential depends on their own efforts, the support of teammates, and the unselfish guidance of the coach. They must be exposed to quality playing and training environments which extend their mental, physical, tactical and technical capabilities to their limit. Players must have a sound understanding of soccer principles and concepts, and they should show emotional stability when confronted with pressure situations.



<b>Where:</b>	Select programs (provincial, national), NTC, Clubs, semi-pro teams, pro-teams.
<b>Why:</b>	Player development and talent identification for late developers.
<b>Who:</b>	Club head coaches & team coaches, Provincial & National team coaches, pro team coaches, university coaches.
<b>Coaching:</b>	CSA National B and A License.

- **Physical** — Further develop flexibility, correct warm-up and cool-down, agility, aerobic and anaerobic endurance, strength, core strength and stability, balance, nutrition and proper diet (pre-game, post-game, tournaments), prevention and care of injuries, importance of rest and recovery.
- **Technical** — Refinement of core skills and position specific-skills; continued development of advanced techniques and skills.
- **Tactical** — Decision-making tactical awareness, game appreciation, game analysis, match coaching, productivity, competitive proficiency.
- **Mental** — Increased player concentration, responsibility, discipline, accountability, goal setting, self-confidence, self-motivation, will to win, mental toughness, competitive mentality in practice and games; satisfy player’s urge for competition; importance of being educated in the game (watch games on TV and National team games).

#### Game Structure:

Game Format	Squad Size	Game duration	Ball Size	FIELD SIZES		GOAL SIZES no larger than
				Min/Max width	Min/Max length	
11 v 11	Ideal 16/Max 18	2 x 40 min.	5	FIFA reg.	FIFA reg.	8f/2.44m X 24f/7.32m
11 v 11	Ideal 16/Max 18	2 x 45 min.	5	FIFA reg.	FIFA reg.	8f/2.44m X 24f/7.32m

**Recommended training times:** 75 to 90 minutes.

**Season Length:** Year-round play that includes appropriate rest and recovery periods.

#### Recommendations:

- Appropriate ratio of training, competition and rest throughout the year; periodized planning is critical.
- Training to competition ratio should be between 5 to 12 for every game.
- Players should play regularly in highly competitive professional and international match play.





# STAGE 6: Training to Win

## U18+ Female / U19+ Male

### “BUILDING THE WORLD CUP PLAYER”

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The majority, if not all, of the player's physical, technical, tactical, and psychological qualities are now fully established, and the focus of training has shifted to optimization of performance. They may still require additional tactical experience in high-pressure games to develop consistency. The focus is on the maximization of all capacities.

<b>Where:</b>	Select programs (national), semi-pro teams, pro-teams.
<b>Why:</b>	High performance.
<b>Who:</b>	National team coaches, and semi-pro and professional team coaches.
<b>Coaching:</b>	CSA National A License + advanced courses.

- **Physical** – Individual fitness program for maintenance, improve ment; work and recovery must be well monitored; periodization is critical.
- **Technical** – Further development of advanced techniques and skills; refinement of general skills and individual positional skills; game-related technical repetition under pressure.
- **Tactical** – High degree of decision making, leadership and game analysis skills; ability to adjust game plan and adapt playing strategies to suit changing demands.
- **Mental** – Increased concentration and responsibility, leadership, discipline, accountability, goal setting, self confidence, self motivation, will to win, mental toughness, competitive mentality, established pre-practice and pre-game routine.



**Game Structure:** FIFA Rules.

**Recommended training times:** 75 to 90 minutes.

**Season Length:** Year-round play that includes appropriate rest and recovery periods.

**Recommendations:**

- Appropriate ratio of training, competition and rest throughout the year; periodized planning critical.
- Training to competition ratio should be between 5 to 12 for every game.
- Players should play regularly in highly competitive professional and international match play.



# 7

## STAGE 7: Active for Life

Any age Female and Male

### “SOCCER FOR HEALTH & GRASSROOTS GROWTH”

At any stage in the LTPD model, regardless of their level of ability, players may decide to play soccer as a purely recreational sport so they can continue to enjoy the game and maintain lifelong wellness. They might be youth players who decide not to pursue high performance, or they might be top players from senior clubs, colleges, universities, and semi-professional teams who enjoy competition but do not intend to play at the international level. They might also be complete newcomers to the game who discover an interest in soccer in late adolescence or adult life. Players at all levels should have opportunities to become active in soccer coaching, officiating and administration. The recruitment and retention of players, coaches, referees and administrators is key to the ongoing development of both grassroots and elite soccer in Canada.

#### Youth Players

Many youth players pursue the dream of representing Canada; others play for simple enjoyment of the game, the camaraderie of being on a team, and the health benefits that the sport provides. LTPD seeks to provide opportunities for youth players to continue in the game, even if they do not pursue high-performance play.

#### Competitive and High-Performance Players

Many players with senior clubs, colleges, universities and semi-professional teams enjoy competition but do not intend to play at the international level. Along with thousands of adults playing in various competitive divisions, they deserve opportunities to continue playing at an appropriate level that sustains their passion for the beautiful game.

#### Newcomers

Soccer attracts newcomers of all ages who want to enjoy a team sport while learning new skills and improving their health and wellness. Opportunities should exist to encourage these latecomers to learn and play the game, regardless of their skill level or ability.

#### Player Retention

After they retire from playing, soccer players of all abilities (including senior club, high-performance and professional) should be encouraged to pursue careers as soccer coaches, mentors, referees, administrators or sport science specialists. Soccer and its governing bodies benefit when players are formally encouraged and retained within the fabric of the game.

<b>Where:</b>	Clubs, communities, schools, universities, colleges and wherever the game is played.
<b>Why:</b>	For the development of the game; for the right to play despite ability, age, or gender; for the joy of learning a new sport at any age.
<b>Who:</b>	Coaches of all ages and genders.
<b>Coaching:</b>	Training based on level of play: Active for life or competition stream.

- **Physical** — Follow appropriate guidelines in the areas of endurance, strength and flexibility training to remain active or play competitive.
- **Technical** — Learn new skills, or use and maintain skills already acquired.
- **Tactical** — Basic tactics are sufficient to enjoy the game at a recreational level. More advanced are required for competitive level.
- **Mental** — Focus on having fun, in addition to stress release and fitness discipline.

**Game Structure:** Adapt the game structure to suit the level of play, number of players, and available space.

**Recommended training times:** 75 to 90 minutes.

**Season Length:** Year-round play that includes appropriate rest and recovery periods.

#### Recommendations:

- Access for players of all ages, genders and ability.
- Costs to players should be minimized to ensure maximum participation.
- No league standings - emphasis on FUN at the recreational level.
- Appropriate ratio of training, competition and rest throughout the year; periodized planning is critical.



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## Further Information

The Canadian Soccer LTPD model, Wellness to World Cup presented by BMO, is designed to optimize Canadian excellence and lifelong wellness through soccer. By ensuring fun playing experiences for children, a suitable player development pathway for youth, and opportunities for lifelong participation for all players regardless of age, gender, ability or disability, LTPD provides a framework for the growth and success of the Beautiful Game in Canada.

To learn more about Wellness to World Cup presented by BMO visit:  
[www.CanadaSoccer.com](http://www.CanadaSoccer.com)

To learn more about LTAD visit: [www.canadiansportforlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca)



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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through Sport Canada, a branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

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[www.CanadaSoccer.com](http://www.CanadaSoccer.com)

