

Alberta Soccer Association

# Player Development Priorities



***Developed January 2008 based on the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) and Long Term Player Development Models (LTPD)***



# **ALBERTA SOCCER ASSOCIATION PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

**The four corner stones of development for any athlete in any sport are:  
Technical, Tactical, Mental and Physical.**

## **Technical: (Unopposed practice.)**

The emphasis is on development of a game technique; (receiving, passing, running with the ball, dribbling, striking, shooting, heading etc.). Gradual challenges to development of the technique are in the form of increased or decreased time, area, or degree of difficulty in practice, depending on the rate of improvement in player performance.

## **Tactical: (Opposed practice.)**

Skill practice; emphasis on developing the bond of technique and decision making. All players are given objectives from the technical theme being practiced. Appropriate areas, number of players involved, and imposed “conditions” will vary around the developmental theme.

## **Mental (Psychological)**

Factors that influence performance by contributing to individual and team success. They range from players younger than ten being motivated by frequent praise, fun and enjoyment ; from ten to sixteen, game preparation, setting goals, coping with winning and losing; to sixteen and older, concentration, responsibility, mental toughness, self motivation, self confidence and preparation for competition.

## **Physical Training**

The “ABCs”; Agility (Co-ordination), Balance, Core and speed. Body core refers to the mid section; pelvis, abdominals, back and chest muscles. All movements originate in the core. Working the muscles in your body core will improve effectiveness of movements in your limbs, and can be simply stated as “training our bodies to move.” Core strength is important at every age, ability and fitness level.

## **GENERAL OVERVIEW OF AGE GROUP PRIORITIES**

**(Based on the Long-term Athlete Development/Long-term Player Development Models)**

### **U10 years old:**

#### **Developmental Theme; Movement, Education, and Enjoyment.**

Discovery of the ball and discovery of the game by playing.

Development of basic movements with and without the ball.

Introduction to agility, balance, core training, stimulation

motivation, and guided discovery in a fun, safe, environment

### **U10 to U14:**

#### **Developmental Theme; Technical Improvement;**

Mastery of individual ball contact, ball movement, and ball control.

Development of cognitive (perception, decision and response) abilities.

Development of technique on demand in basic tactical (team shape) games.

Introduction to mental and psychological factors that influence performance.

Core Training: balance, co-ordination, body movements with/without the ball

### **U14 to U18:**

#### **Developmental Theme; Technical and Tactical Improvement;**

Application of attacking and defending principles of play.

Further development of cognitive (reading the game) skills.

Technical tactical and positional analysis and adjustment.

Three key areas for 16 years and older:

Technique on demand, speed of play, and decision making.

Mental/psychological attributes that contribute to team success.

Core Training: balance, co-ordination, strength, speed, endurance.

### **18 years and older (Post Training Stage):**

#### **Developmental theme; Individually Tailored Technical/Physical programs.**

Tactical versatility in attacking, defending, and transition.

Understanding of playing systems and tactical organizations.

Technical and tactical awareness in all re-start game situations.

Personal preparation in all educational and training related aspects.

Core Training: technique on demand, strength, speed, and endurance

## **SPECIFIC AGE GROUP PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Under 10 years old the Development Theme is Education, Enjoyment and Movement**

Children need a safe, supportive, challenging and enjoyable environment. Training objectives and priorities must be simple, progressive, and adapted to the age and abilities of the young players.

Programs should be developed and guided by specially prepared coaches who understand the needs of children, and conducted in conditions of maximum safety.

#### **Simple Technical Objectives; “Discovery of the Ball”**

- **Important;** the ball should be smaller and lighter than those used by older, bigger and stronger players

#### **Training Methods;**

- Variety of enjoyable and progressive exercises that include running, dribbling, stopping, throwing, catching, controlling, passing and kicking
- Fun games-specific and non specific to soccer.

#### **Simple Tactical Objectives; “Discovery of the Game”**

- **Important;** games must be simple with clear objectives, not complex
- Lots of fun and enjoyment that builds motivation to continue to play.
- Lots of ball touches and guided discovery (they invent “moves”)
- Introduce the players to team/group play, and healthy competition
- Develop a foundation of simple/basic technical/tactical behaviour

#### **Training Methods;**

- At any age level the basic team concept is the triangle.
- Introduce them to this team concept by playing 3V 3 (U6), 4V4 (U8), and 5V5 (U10)

#### **Psychological Techniques.**

- Children are motivated by frequent positive reinforcement
- They are stimulated by guided discovery and experimentation
- Coaches must guide them in their search for identity and personality

#### **Physical Objectives; “Introduction to the ABCs.”**

- Agility(Co-ordination) Balance, Core and speed.

#### **Training Methods;**

- Variety of movements and activities with and without the ball
- Chasing games, relay competitions, quick feet exercises, general games

**From 10 to 14 years old the Development Themes are Technical (mastery of the ball), Basic Tactical (game skills), Physical (body shape) and Mental (psychological) skills**

### **Technical Objectives (unopposed)**

#### **Repertoire of technical movements and confidence on the ball**

- Ball control: under pressure, at speed, when tired, or being challenged
- Moving; receiving ball on the turn, passing, dribbling, feinting, crossing
- Receiving with a variety of body parts, and finishing (scoring)
- Speed of execution when making moves (correct, quick decisions)
- Goalkeeping: basic shot stopping, and distribution

#### **Training Methods; Progressive exercises to achieve mastery of the ball;**

- 1 player 1 ball, 2 players, 1 ball, (combining), 3 players 1 ball (triangulation)
- Various exercises and contests that challenge technique (time, area, difficulty)

### **Basic Tactical Objectives (opposed)**

#### **Attacking Principles**

- Ball possession in all areas of the field
- Combining with players; wall pass, takeovers, overlaps, lay-offs
- Triangulation; (passing between three players), third man running
- Crossing and finishing
- Goalkeeping : distribution

#### **Zonal Defending Principles**

- Press, support, and balance principles
- Compact team shape

#### **Training Methods;**

- Progressive small sided games
- 2V1, 3V1, 4V1, 3V2, 4V2, 5V2 , 3V3, 4V4, 5V5, 6V6, 7V7
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#### **Mental Aspects;**

- Concentration, perseverance, aggressiveness
- Cognitive skills: perception and anticipation
- Mental causes of success and lack of success
- Personal and team concepts of discipline

#### **Training Methods;**

- 1V1 duels with attacking/defending aims
- Simple analysis of success and lack of success

**Physical Objectives;**

- Core training, agility, balance, coordination plus speed

**Training methods;**

- Body movement exercises, with and without the ball

**From 14 to 18 years old, the Development Themes are  
Technical (position specific), Tactical (game analysis),  
Mental (toughness) and Physical (extension)**

**Attacking Principles of Play;**

- Retaining possession in buildup play
- Retaining possession in counter attacks
- Striker movement and supporting runs
- Crossing and finishing from crosses
- Finishing in and around the penalty area
- Goalkeepers: communication and distribution
- Restarts and set plays

**Defending Principles of Play;**

- Understanding and application of zonal defending
- Understanding of zonal and mixed defending
- Defending in the attacking, middle, and back thirds
- Technique and tactics in all dead ball situations
- Goalkeepers: communication and shot stopping
- Restarts and set plays

**Training Methods;**

- Training games, Functional practices, Phases of play practices

**Three key areas for 16 years and older:**

- Speed of play, technique on demand, and decision making

**Mental Aspects;**

- Cognitive skills (perception, decision, response)
- Knowledge of psychological factors that influence performance
- Training of mental attributes on the field of play
- Team building concepts

**Training Methods;**

- Small sided games with focus on; concentration, attention, self confidence, aggressiveness, control of emotions, determination
- Tactical games with instructions that develop perception skills; anticipation, analysis, and decision making

**Physical Aspects;**

- Core training; agility, balance, coordination plus speed
- Aerobic endurance, muscular strength and relaxation
- Rhythmic speed and cyclical speed
- Monitoring of performance and prevention
- Nutrition; aspects of sports performance

## **Training Methods;**

- Multiple objective training sessions
- Integrated sessions with the ball
- Common to all sports training sessions



**18 years old and older the Development Themes are  
Technical (on demand), Tactical (strategies),  
Mental (accountability) and Physical (individual)**

**Technical and Tactical Training Objectives:**

**Attacking and Defending Principles of Play;**

- Application of technique on demand with expectation of success
- Tactical versatility in attacking, defending, and transition between
- Versatility in application of zonal and mixed forms of defending
- Changes in systems and organizations for tactical reasons
- Technique and tactics in all dead ball situations
- Role of the goalkeeper in attacking and defending

**Training Methods;**

- Training games, functional and phase of play practices

**Mental Aspects;**

- Visualization and communication
- Self evaluation of performance (goal setting)
- Relaxation skills
- Personal preparation

**Training methods;**

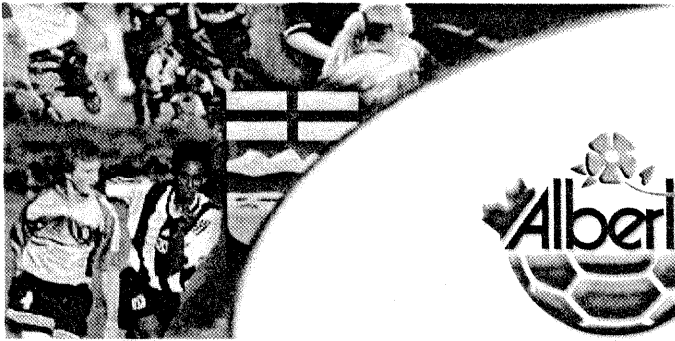
- Individual training programs designed by Sports Psychologists, Hypnotherapists and other experts

**Physical Aspects;**

- Co-ordination, technique, and endurance
- Strength and co-ordination; speed and technique
- Aerobic, anaerobic, technical and tactical endurance
- Aerobic power, speed, strength and technique
- Speed, co-ordination and suppleness
- Integrated training sessions with the ball
- Sports nutrition for maximum energy

**Training Methods;**

- Expert personal trainers
- Specially designed individual programs



# Alberta Soccer Association Technical Team

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