



# UNITED FUTBOL ACADEMY

# SOUTH GEORGIA

Coaching Handbook – Abbreviated Version  
(Academy & Select)

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# ***Principles of Soccer***

## ***Attacking Principles***

1. **Penetration:** Advancing the ball past opposing players by shooting, dribbling, running, or passing.
2. **Support:** Assisting teammates by reading the game, providing strong communication, creating safe options and opportunities for advancement. Creating numbers up situations in the attacking third.
3. **Width:** Attacking on a broad front, stretching the defense and creating space, isolating defenders to 1v1 and creating opportunities for through-balls.
4. **Mobility:** Creating attacking opportunities through change in position and movement off the ball. Using third man runs to create numbers up situations in the attacking third.
5. **Creativity:** Individual flair achieved by takeovers, overlaps, diagonal runs, and blind side runs.

## ***Defending Principles***

1. **Delay:** Slowing down the attack by closing the gap and denying space to allow the defense to get organized. (Pressure)
2. **Cover:** Assisting the defense by providing strong communication, reading the attack, and creating numerical superiority.
3. **Balance:** Reading the attack and providing an equal or greater number of defenders than attackers at the point of attack, while simultaneously covering the vital area near the goal.
4. **Compactness:** Compressing or restricting the attack into a confined area, making it more predictable and easily defended.
5. **Composure:** Patience to delay and wait for support, discipline to play ball-side or goal-side to take away shooting opportunities.

# Age Group Characteristics

Before we are able to effectively coach the children that have been entrusted to our care, we need to understand the characteristics of whom we are developing. It is imperative that you understand that when you are dealing with children, that you take the time to comprehend where they are currently in their own development.

## U - 10 Characteristics

At this age, there are some children that are becoming more physically mature. Among your group, there are now some bigger and faster players whose eye-hand and eye-foot coordination is a little ahead of the majority of your players. Some of your players may also demonstrate a greater capacity to stay focused for longer periods of time. At the same time, they are still people of action rather than thought. Explanations must still be brief, concise and purposeful. What seemed to make sense to them last practice may have to be almost relearned at the next practice. Care should be taken with players, regardless of athletic ability, to address ball skill, especially in tight spaces.

The faster, stronger players should not be encouraged to use their athleticism to solve all their problems. Building comfort with the ball at ages nine and ten will provide them with a variety of crucial tools they will need as they get older, and the level of ball skill and athleticism rises. Begin to introduce the players to the idea of thinking about their decisions and movement as being related to themselves and one or at most two of their teammates and one or two of their opponents.

## U - 12 Characteristics

The U-12 age group seems to be the moment in youth soccer that causes the most discussion concerning player development. Are these players young adults or are they still children? As soccer players, they are still young. Although there are some areas of the game where the players are beginning to make progress, this is an age where ball skill and soccer instincts must be encouraged above the results.

Physically, eleven and twelve year olds' bodies are beginning to change. Often, this results in awkward growth spurts. Rapid bone growth often results in painful joint conditions such as Osgood-Schlotters syndrome in the knees. Players that, in the past, showed precise control over their bodies and the ball will sometimes now temporarily lose this coordination. As their bodies grow, especially the 11-year-olds, they will also need more rest. The coach may also find the 11- year-old to be somewhat contrary and oppositional. Typically by 12 years old, children are regaining some of the coordination and compliance that was temporary lost at 11.

Generally at this age, there is more enthusiasm and ability to focus their energy toward both individual and team challenges. Coaches can use this enthusiasm and focus to their advantage by giving the players specific problems to solve within the games they play.

## U - 14 Characteristics

This becomes the transitional age into the adult game. The match form should be 11 v 11 and there begins to be a greater focus on how ball skill and decisions influence success on the field.

At this point, there is a clear difference between the emotional and physical maturity of a 13-year-old and an 18-year-old. While there is not a big difference between the way a 13-year-old or an 18-year-old processes information (thinking and problem solving), keep in mind that the 13-year old is just beginning to think at this level. In contrast, an 18-year old will have more experience and confidence in his or her ability to think and problem solve in this manner.

13-year-old children are now less certain about themselves, less communicative, and somewhat more vulnerable. They are now more focused on their friends and begin to view themselves as being somewhat separate from their parents. They are also stronger physically and are more aware of what their bodies can do (speed, strength, appearance).

The 14-year-old is typically becoming more outgoing and confident and loves competition. He or she is also increasingly more able to plan, think ahead, and to imagine options. Coaches can have more discussion about the "what if..."

From now on the matches are full-sided 11 v 11 games. It is at the U-14 age group that coaches should begin to focus somewhat on team issues, such as how the backs work together in different parts of the field, or the relationship between the different lines of the team (defenders and midfielders, mid-fielders and forwards, etc.). As the players graduate to the junior level, they should possess a comfort with the ball and an insight into the game that will allow them to deal with the increased pace of the game, both in athletic speed and speed of decisions.

The goal at this point in a player's development is to begin expanding his or her understanding of the game as their technical and game maturity allows. Again, this is accomplished through the small-sided game model for practice (up through 9 v 9 games) and the full-sided game for matches. The graduation to the full-sided game model should be a logical and subtle step. The ideas and principles that apply to the smaller game models continue to apply to the bigger game. The outcome of the game at this age is still largely determined by ball skill and game insight.

## U - 16 Characteristics

By 15 and 16 years old, the players should be comfortable dealing with the ball in a variety of situations. With this in mind, the coach should look to address several issues over the course of the two year cycle that address how basic tactical issues can influence the game:

- (1) Small group ideas on both sides of the ball (Moving forward together on the attack, realistic pressure, and how to help your team win the ball back).
- (2) How the small group ideas tie into larger team concepts. Such as the similarities and differences between high and low pressure, keeping your back line connected with your attacking players during possession in your attacking half of the field, or rhythm of play issues (when to speed up and when to slow down).
- (3) Some basic positional responsibilities and how, as a team, these responsibilities are interconnected. For example, how the backs share defensive responsibilities, how decisions that the defending line makes are related to the decisions of the players in front of them, or the role of the holding midfielder in your team's possession.
- (4) Accountability for their execution and decisions with the ball. Players at this age must aspire to have technical precision. Players need to be made aware of how their ability to collect and pass the ball has a direct impact on all aspects of the game.

*Note: These concepts and goals are all based on the assumption that the players are good enough with the ball to be able to begin dealing this next level of soccer. If they do not possess the requisite skills to begin taking on these new challenges, it is the responsibility of the coach to make sure they continue to work on the tools that they lack.*

## U - 18 Characteristics

At this age, the technical blueprint of who the player will be as an adult soccer player is almost complete. From here on, any growth is largely determined by how well the player has developed up to this point. Most of the growth is fine-tuning the qualities that already exist. Areas that can still be influenced greatly are game insight, physical conditioning and attitude.

In the rest of the world, this is the age where players are signing their first professional contracts with their clubs. Their technical abilities and their "soccer sense" have placed them in a position to begin making a living as a player. In this environment, however, they need to work everyday to improve their game in order to keep their place on the team and to continue to advance up the line to the senior team.

Unfortunately, in the United States players are not consistently exposed to this type of environment. As a result, American players, even at the regional and national level, generally do not have the technical proficiency, game insight or disciplined approach that is expected at this age, and/or for players who have been involved in playing soccer for the past ten to twelve years of their lives.

With that said, coaches should continue to place consistent focus on these three areas of the player's game: technical proficiency and precision, game insight and the individual's responsibility for improving his or her game. There are also several match related tactical issues on which the coach can now begin to place more focus. For example, playing different systems, preparing for matches and employing tactics based on the strength of your opponent. Within each of these match related tactical issues, comes a focus on general positional responsibilities as well as specific positional roles, and how and when to pressure as a team, all of which are determined by your system of play or the tactics used for your matches. Additionally, game management issues, such as how to keep a lead in the final 15 minutes of a match or how to push for a draw or a win in the 2nd half or in the final 15 minutes of a match become important themes to address.

(USSF Best Practices Manual)

# Age-Specific Training Objectives

U9-10	U11-12	U13-14	U15-16	U17-19
<b>Individual Skills</b>	<b>Individual and Partner Skills</b>	<b>Development of Group Skill/Tactics</b>	<b>Development of Positional Play</b>	<b>Development of Team Play</b>
<b>TECHNICAL</b>	<b>TECHNICAL</b>	<b>TECHNICAL</b>	<b>TECHNICAL</b>	<b>TECHNICAL</b>
Ball mastery	Build on the skill base	Build on the skill base	Build on the skill base	Build on the skill base
Moves to beat opponent	Dribbling to beat an opponent	Emphasize the development of individual skills under the pressure of time, space, and an opponent	Passing: using all surfaces and overall weight & accuracy of pass	Passing: using all surfaces and overall weight & accuracy of pass
Running with the ball	Feints with the Ball (body movements to unbalance the opponent)	Passing: Work on short, long, curved, crossed, driven and chipped using all surfaces. All should be learned on the run.	Receiving: quality of first touch	Receiving: quality of first touch
Short passing to feet and space	Running with the ball towards and away from opponents	Receiving ground and air balls on the run (emphasize a quality first touch)	Shooting/Finishing: from all angles and under pressure	Shooting/Finishing: from all angles and under pressure
Receiving away from pressure	Receiving Air Balls with Feet, Thighs and Chest	Shooting: Work on shooting on the run, on the turn, from all angles, from crosses and from volleys	Increase overall technical speed	Increase overall technical speed
Receiving and turning	Deceptive passing (toe, outside of foot, heel)	Heading: Work on going to goal, to pass and to clear	<i>See position specific objectives below</i>	<i>See position specific objectives below</i>
Shielding	Mid-range passing to feet and space	Crossing to near post and penalty spot		
Juggling (alone and in small groups)	Heading attacking & defending	Continue to increase technical speed		
	Introduce volleys and half volleys			

<b>TACTICAL</b>	<b>TACTICAL</b>	<b>TACTICAL</b>	<b>TACTICAL</b>	<b>TACTICAL</b>
Attacking principles 1-2	Attacking principles 1-3	Attacking principles 1-4	Attacking principles 1-5	Attacking principles 1-5
Defending principles 1-2	Defending principles 1-3	Defending principles 1-4	Defending principles 1-5	Defending principles 1-5
Playing ball out from the back	Playing ball out from the back	Playing ball out from the back	Playing ball out from the back	Playing ball out from the back
Combination play	Combination play	Zonal Defending (Flat 4)	Zonal Defending (Flat 4)	Zonal Defending (Flat 4)
Transition	Possession	Playing ball through the middle third	Playing/keeping the ball in the middle and final third	Playing/keeping the ball in the middle and final third
	Transition	Switching the point of attack	Switching the point of attack	Switching the point of attack
		2/3 Man Combination play	2/3 Man Combination play	2/3 Man Combination play
		Possession	Team Possession – Speed of play & probing	Team Possession – Speed of play & probing
		Phases/patterns of play	Phases/patterns of play	Phases/patterns of play
		Transition	High/Low Pressure	High/Low Pressure
			Counter attacking	Counter attacking
			Transition	Set pieces
				Transition
<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>PHYSICAL</b>
Balance/Coordination	Balance/Coordination	Perception/Awareness	Perception/Awareness	Perception/Awareness
Perception/Awareness	Perception/Awareness	Quickness/Acceleration	Quickness/Acceleration	Quickness/Acceleration
Quickness/Acceleration	Quickness/Acceleration	Change of direction	Reaction	Reaction
Change of direction	Change of direction	Reaction	Flexibility/Mobility	Flexibility/Mobility
	Reaction	Flexibility/Mobility	Agility	Agility
	Flexibility/Mobility	Agility	Endurance	Endurance
	Agility		Recovery	Recovery
<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>	<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>	<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>	<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>	<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>
Motivation	Motivation	Motivation	Motivation	Motivation
Respect	Respect	Respect	Respect	Respect
Discipline	Discipline	Discipline	Discipline	Discipline
	Commitment	Commitment	Commitment	Commitment
	Self confidence	Self confidence	Self confidence	Self confidence
		Competitiveness	Competitiveness	Competitiveness
		Concentration	Concentration	Concentration
		Cooperation	Cooperation	Cooperation
			Decision/Determination	Decision/Determination
			Communication	Communication
				Self-control

# Position-Specific Training Objectives

## Defenders

### **Technical**

- Press opponents effectively: intercepting passes, spoiling possession and contacting attackers
- Challenges decisively and fairly
- Clean ball contacts; header and volley clearances.
- Can defend in all 1v1 situations, including counter attacks
- Clean first touch to space, excellent at dealing with air balls
- Runs with the ball into midfield and beyond with composure
- Can play accurate passes to forward players in front and behind the opposing defense
- Passes the ball with both feet, using any surface of the foot, over a variety of distances with deception and spin. Passing into midfield and forward areas if necessary
- Can beat an opponent with a safe trick/move

### **Tactical**

- Understands how/when to mark opponents from different distances according to game circumstances
- Understands how to defend individually and collectively and the concepts of defensive safety and risk
- Reads the game well and positions effectively; covering other defenders and spaces effectively
- Tracks opponents' movements and can pass players onto team-mates if required
- Defends with composure and accuracy; anticipating play and making good decisions
- Supports, receives and plays 'in' and from the defensive third with composure and understanding
- Can move into midfield areas to play intelligently with midfield players
- Changes the ball-position and play as required

## Midfielders

### **Technical**

- Available to receive the ball in all circumstances
- Can receive, secure and protect the ball under pressure
- Turns with the ball whenever possible in a variety of ways
- Uses a variety of one-touch skills with both feet (and all surfaces) over a wide passing range
- Delivers passes to forward players (or forward moving players) with sensitivity and accuracy, either aerially or on the ground. These passes can be executed over a range of distances with deception and variety
- Can beat an opponent individually, or through combination with team mates
- Strikes accurate shots on goal from distances of up to 30 yards

### **Tactical**

- Understands playing the game 'side on'
- Possesses excellent vision and awareness and observes all options available
- Retains possession with efficient passing skills
- Can play with disguise: showing one option, but performing another
- Moves into goal-scoring positions inside the penalty area and scores with varied techniques
- Reads opponents attacking play and positions appropriately; Recovers, presses, tracks and marks when defending
- Has an awareness and understanding of unfolding game events



## Wide Attackers

### **Technical**

- Receives the ball and turns to attack defenders
- Can beat an opponent with one or no touches when receiving
- Provides accurate passes and crosses to team mates in goal-scoring positions whilst moving at maximum speed
- Scores goals in a variety of ways, using different surfaces and skills

### **Tactical**

- Where possible shows for passes behind the oppositions' defense in wide positions
- Eludes tight-marking opponents to receive passes in front of the defense in wide and infield positions
- Combines with support players to beat the immediate wide defender
- Attacks opponents with the ball with the intention of eliminating them individually
- Can read an opponent's defending circumstances and evade them using varied dribbling skills
- Attacks infield, with and without the ball. To contribute to penetrative play around the penalty area
- Performs a defensive support role: recovering, pressing and tracking opponents
- Shows a willingness to operate in defensive situations and understands defending strategies and tactics

## Forwards

### **Technical**

- Scores at a rate of 1 goal per 1.5 games played
- Can react to any incoming service, or loose ball, and finish with one or two touches
- Links with support players using one or two touches
- Protects the ball in tightly opposed situations, allowing supporting runs to take place
- Turns with the ball as frequently as possible
- Is effective in 1v1 situations

### **Tactical**

- Shows as a pass outlet for players in possession in the defending third and deep midfield areas
- Understands how to position against and around opponents to cause maximum disadvantage
- Makes calculated movements and adopt positions that raise doubts in the minds of defenders of how to counteract these individual tactics
- Has the awareness and ability to exploit the spaces between and behind defenses, to receive passes in goal-scoring and goal-creating positions
- Escapes man-markers with timely and intelligent individual movement
- Understands positional movement and how to move opponents from good to poor defending positions, to allow others to exploit the space created
- Moves into goal-scoring positions
- Channels, traps and contains opponents in possession in their defensive third
- Presses, marks and tracks opponents as required

# *Technical Coaching Points*

<b>DRIBBLING</b>	<b>PASSING</b>	<b>HEADING</b>
Agility and balance	Body mechanics, ankle locked, plant foot placement etc.	Foot position and being light on the feet is very important in order to jump for the ball
Contact surface of foot	Balance	Get in line with the flight of the ball
Change of direction and speed (incorporating a move)	Weight of pass	Keep your eye on the ball at all times
Deception	Accuracy	Time the run and jump to head the ball at your highest point
Setting up defender	Disguise	Use the forehead at all times to head the ball
Protecting the ball	Vision	Direct the ball down toward the target – i.e. goal, teammate, path of teammate, away from goal in defense
Vision	Tactical application to the game – selection of pass, timing of pass	
Tactical application to the game		
<b>RECEIVING/TURNING</b>	<b>SHOOTING/FINISHING</b>	<b>CROSSING</b>
Body position and balance	Body mechanics and control of body	Body mechanics foot surface, plant foot position (lofted, driven or curved crosses)
Get into line of flight of the ball	Body position and balance	Body shape and balance
Early selection of controlling surface	Eye on ball	Eye on the ball
Present controlling surface to ball	Quality of preparation touch	Angle of approach
Relax and withdraw controlling surface just before contact	Contact surface	Preparation touch before crossing
Importance of first touch to control and prepare ball	Aggressive and positive mentality	Quality of cross – weight of cross, speed of cross
Turn with one touch	Vision and anticipation	Tactical application to the game – choice of cross to create goal scoring opportunity
Vision	Tactical application to the game – choice of surface, placement versus power, positioning to gain an advantage	
Tactical application to the game – first touch takes ball away from pressure		

<b>POSSESSION</b>	<b>DEFENDING</b>	
Roles of players in order to maintain possession	Key coaching points for pressure:	Key coaching points for cover:
Angle, Distance and Timing of Support	Closing down – pressuring opponent	Angle and distance
Body position – open to field	Recovery runs – goal side positioning	Intercept pass – deny turn – deny penetration
Decision making	Angle and speed of approach	Tracking – recovery runs
Verbal and visual communication	Body shape, balance, and foot positioning	Changing role of pressure and cover
Shape of team to maintain possession	Control and restraint	Visual and verbal communication – recognizing visual cues for decision making
	Delay, channel, Deny turn	
	Timing and decision to tackle	
<b>ATTACKING</b>		
Key coaching points for penetrating player in possession (1st attacker) are:	Key coaching points for player giving close support (2nd attacker) are:	Key coaching points for unbalancing attacker (3rd attacker) are:
When to shoot	Supporting angle and distance to ball	Unbalancing the defense
When to pass	Support position behind ball	Create space for others
When to dribble	Support position in advance of the ball	Attack space behind defense
	Support position lateral to ball	
	Combination play (1-2, double pass, overlap, take over)	

# Phases of the Game

<b>MOMENTS OF THE GAME</b>		
<b>When in “possession of the ball” players must:</b>	<b>When “opponent in possession of the ball” players must:</b>	<b>During change of possession (Transition) players must quickly:</b>
Quickly make playing area as big as possible – width and depth.	Quickly make playing area as small as possible.	When losing possession:
Penetrate whenever possible	Put pressure on ball	Nearest player disrupts opponent (immediate pressure when feasible, drop and delay when not)
Maintain possession of the ball	Mark “tighter” near the ball and “looser” away from the ball	Remaining players recover into defending positions to limit time and space
Create chances to score goals	Maintain team depth and balance	When regaining possession:
	Depending on situation:	Player recovering ball attempts to play forward
	<i>Move towards the ball (press) or</i>	Players close to ball offer immediate support
	<i>Towards own goal (delay) or</i>	Players away from ball make the field big (length and width)
	<i>Toward the flanks (squeeze)</i>	
<b>DECISIONS FOR THIRDS OF THE FIELD</b>		
<b>In the attacking third of the field the general tactics are: MOVE - RECEIVE - FINISH</b>	<b>In the midfield third or the field the general tactics are: BUILD - CONNECT - SUPPORT</b>	<b>In the defensive third of the field the general tactics are: DENY - DESTROY - DEVELOP</b>
Run into open space with and without the ball	Buildup	Immediate chase (pressure)
Forward and penetrating passes	Maintain possession	Fall back/delay (retreat/recover)
Immediate support (depth)	Dribble into open space	Concentration (funnel/channel)
Improvisation (dribbling)	Combination passing (support)	Balance (depth)
Finishing (shot on goal)	Total team support (connection)	Control/restraint (challenge for the ball)
	Develop a rhythm	Start counter attack (first thought transition)
		Possess - rest - prepare