



Player Development Guidelines

U9 & U10 Boys and Girls Soccer

Medfield Youth Soccer Overview

Medfield Youth Soccer Mission

Medfield Youth Soccer (MYS) is dedicated to providing all children of Medfield a place to play soccer. Our primary focus is on player development, having fun, and providing a safe environment.

- Player Development – our goal is to teach the players how to play soccer to the best of their ability. To accomplish this all players are to be given equal playing time during games and attention during practice.
- Having fun – the number one reason to play is to have fun. The number one reason not to play is that it's not fun. To promote fun we will encourage equal participation in practice and games, matching athletes' ability to their challenges, and by helping to set performance goals, rather than outcome goals.
- Safety first – it is important to always make sure that a safe and age appropriate environment is set for games and practice.

Player Development Guideline

The goal of this document is to:

- Establish clear and age appropriate goals and objectives so our coaches, players and parents know what we are working toward
- Establish objectives so coaches have a common understanding of which skills players should have when they proceed to the next age group
- Establish age appropriate priorities and focus areas in the four elements of the game (technical, tactical, psychological, and physical)
- Ensure consistency among our programs so we're all teaching the same way and using the same vocabulary
- Create confident coaches that are better prepared

U9 & U10 Player Development

Typically a U9/U10 player that starts at age 8 will have 4 seasons of play before he/she move's up to U11's. A fall and spring season at age 8 in the U9 program, and the same at age 9 in the U10 program. Our goal is to develop their basic skills so they are prepared to move up to the next level. We can't expect these young players to master everything below in a single season, but taught consistently from season to season they will get it over time. Keep this in mind as you read through this document.

Key Objectives for the U9/10 MYS Program

- Have fun (players, coaches and parents)
- Players should be sharing the ball
- Focus on intermediate skill
- Begin to learn basic tactics
- Individual, pairs and small group activities up to 3-4 players

Transition Considerations

During the Fall, players typically move up in age groups so you will probably have a number of players on your team that have never played at this level before.

U8's moving up to U9/U10's:

- Are playing on a much bigger field
- Are used to 4v4 vs. 6v6
- May have been taught positions (Wing, Center, Fullback, Goalie) but still lack the discipline to play in formation
- Are not used to playing goal or being able to use their hands in goal
- Are not familiar with the 12 yard line
- Are not used to playing teams from other towns
- Will be playing with and against equally skilled players

Typical Characteristics of U9/10 Players

1. *Attention span lengthens from U8--they start to show the ability to sequence thought and actions*
2. *They start to think ahead and think “If this, then that”*
3. *They are more inclined towards wanting to play soccer rather than being told to play*
4. *Demonstrate increased self-responsibility – bringing a ball, water and all gear should now be their complete responsibility*
5. *They start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts*
6. *Children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure*
7. *Players greatly affiliate with their team or their coach—“I play for the Tigers” or “I play for coach Amy’s team”*
8. *Players at this age are extremely rule bound*
9. *There is a wide continuum of maturity evident on most teams*
10. *This is a crucial age for technical skill development*

Player Development Objectives

This document will help to identify key objectives within the four key areas of player development. The priority areas will evolve for each age group progression. The key areas of player development across all age groups and levels are:



Technical Development– These are the skills used to play the game, i.e. the “fundamentals”. This includes things like dribbling, passing, shooting, receiving, tackling, juggling, heading, etc.

Along with making sure players have fun, skills is probably the most important area for youth players to focus on.



Tactical Development – Tactics for youth soccer focuses largely on decision making, i.e. how players can make the correct decision given a particular situation. We should try to understand the progression of tactics and develop the players in the proper sequence, so that players are comfortable solving easier problems (1v1, 2v1) before they move on to solve more complex ones (4v4):



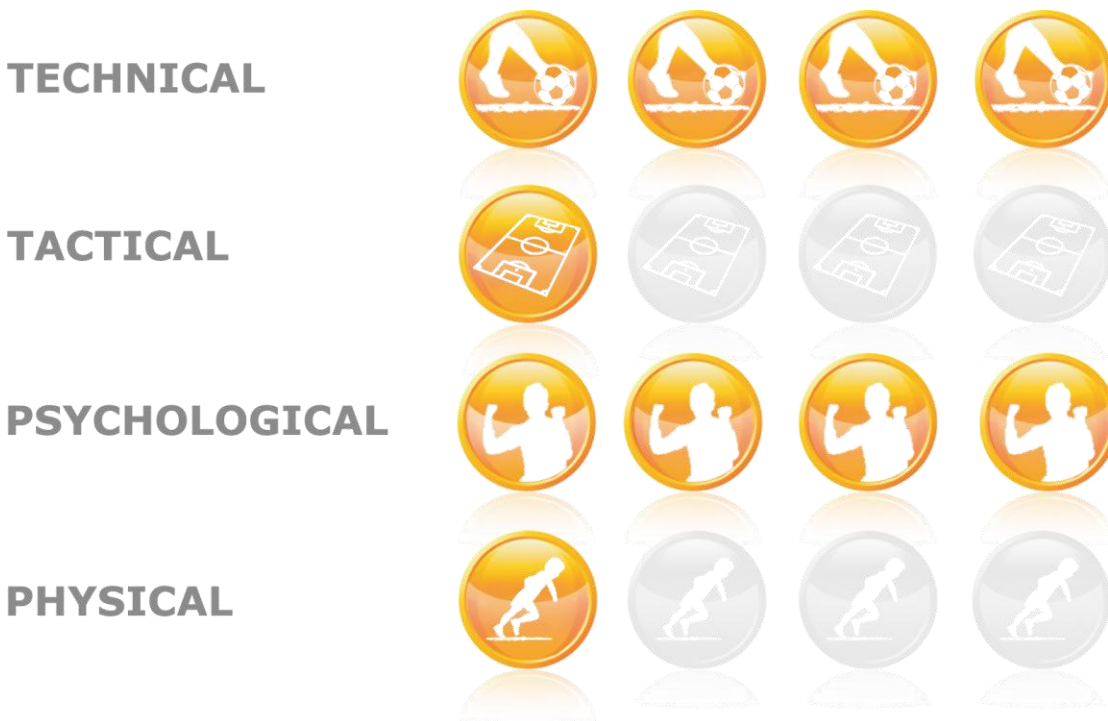
Psychological Development – For youth soccer, this relates to whether the player is having fun playing soccer, and other aspects such as how they deal with winning and losing, their level of motivation, and how they interact with teammates, coaches and their parents.



Physical Development – Fitness for youth soccer players can be largely achieved by just letting them play soccer, although some of the older age groups (U14 and maybe U12) may start incorporating speed and conditioning into practice games and activities.

U9/10 Player Development Objectives

The following key training priorities are recommended by US Youth Soccer and Mass Youth Soccer for coaches of U9/10 players. A focus on helping players develop these skills and basic tactics (and not intermediate or advanced tactics at this stage) is critical as it will serve as the foundation for skills and tactics that will be introduced when these U10 players move on to the next age group.



low



high



medium



very high

Over the next few pages we will go into the specific elements within each area that players will be encouraged to learn before entering the next age level.



U9/10 Technical Skill Priorities

Technical focus at U9/10 level should be a progression of those skills learned at lower levels plus the following:

Field Play - Technical Skills:

- Dribble with all sides of both feet (inside, outside, sole)
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone (feints, fakes, crossovers etc)
- Changes of direction and turns (pullback, inside/outside turns, cruyff turn)
- Soft first touch
- Receiving the ball with inside and outside of foot and chest
- Shielding – Players should develop proper technique to shield the balls from opponents
- Shooting with both feet (with inside of foot and laces)
- Shooting for power, for accuracy and volleying
- Passing with inside and outside of both feet
- Juggling with both feet and thighs (allowing one bounce between juggles if needed)
- Basic thrown-in technique
- Introduce proper defending technique
- Introduce block tackles
- Introduce proper heading technique
- Introduce basic goalkeeping technique

Players should spend equal time developing both feet – this is very important!!!

Goalkeeping - Technical Skills:

- Introduce proper positioning (hands and body)
- Ball distribution (throwing, rolling, punting)
- Basic diving from the ready position.
- Collecting balls from the attacking player's feet.

Continue to focus a fair amount of practice time on dribbling

At this stage, players can be taught a number of dribbling moves that are used frequently in soccer, such as step-overs, scissors, cuts, turns and so on. We should continue to encourage them to be creative in their dribbling. Ronaldinho and Mia Hamm weren't able to pull off their great moves when they were ten years old – but they might have been thinking of those moves at that age!!

Incorporate other basic skills into practice sessions

- **First Touch / Receiving:** Players should be encouraged to focus on developing a soft first touch when receiving the ball. Players should first be shown the proper technique to receive the ball on the ground with both feet. Only when they are comfortable receiving the ball on the ground, should they be shown how to receive balls in the air using both feet, thighs and chest.
- **Shielding:** Players should be shown the proper technique to shield the ball from opponents.
- **Shooting:** Players should be shown proper shooting technique (using their laces) and have plenty of opportunities to practice with both feet.
- **Passing:** Players should be shown the proper technique of passing the ball with the inside and outside of their feet. They should be able to pass the ball accurately over 8-10 yards.
- **Juggling:** Players should continue to work on their ball juggling skills using both feet and thighs.
- **Throw-ins:** Players should be shown the proper way to perform a throw-in.
- **Defending Technique:** Players should be shown the proper defensive stance and how to make block tackles. Players should also be encouraged not to rush into their tackles but to be patient and wait for the right time to win the ball.
- **Heading:** Basic heading technique can be introduced to the older or more experienced players.
- **Goalkeeping:** Basic goalkeeping technique should be introduced to all the players.



U9/10 Tactical Skill Priorities

Tactical focus at U9/U10 level should be at an introductory level. Problem solving and making decisions for themselves are critical tactical elements in young players. Below are some of the tactical skills to focus on at this age-level.

Field Play - Tactical Skills:

- Wall pass (also know as give and go or 1-2)
- Importance of the first touch
- Immediate transition from defense to offense or vice versa
- Role of the second defender (cover)
- Width in the attack
- Player movement on throw-ins
- Penalty kicks

Players should be exposed to these simple tactical scenarios and understand how to both attack and defend these game contexts.

- 1 v 1 (attacking and defending)
- 2 v 1 (attacking and defending)
- 2 v 2 (attacking and defending)

A lot of 1 v 1 duels should be incorporated into practice sessions to allow all the players to get plenty of opportunities to learn how to dribble past an opponent and how to stop one. The basic roles of first and second attackers and defenders should be introduced through 2 v 1 and 2 v 2 games and activities.

Goalkeeping - Tactical Skills:

- Calling for the ball when receiving with defending players
- Communicating with the other players on the team during the game



U9/10 Psychological Development

Psychological focus at U9/U10 level is a major priority. Fostering an environment where our players can grow in confidence, try new things and have fun whilst doing it are critical to developing well rounded players.

- **Keep it fun and enjoyable!!!** This will help foster a desire to play (intrinsic motivation)
- Build confidence
- Encourage imagination and creativity
- Foster our players to be part of a team
- Promote independent decision making
- Promote problem solving
- Encourage player to learn to deal with winning / losing
- Encourage players to watch games on TV

Keep it fun!!!

The most important aspect of psychological development for young players in the U9 & U10 age group is for them to have fun. As a coach, you should strive to create an environment where the players, parents and you, the coach, are all having fun.

Allow the players to make mistakes and encourage them to make their own decisions

As players progress to U10, they play on larger fields and dribbling may not always be the best option. Players will need to start understanding when to dribble, when to pass and to whom, and when to shoot for goal. At this stage, they will often choose the wrong option, but as coaches and parents, we need to be patient with them and encourage them to make these decisions independently, especially during games. Aimless kicking or “booting” of the ball should not be encouraged.

At this age, the players are aware of the score and many parents and coaches are paying more attention to the results. You will start noticing many coaches and parents yelling directions from the sidelines. We should remind ourselves and the parents of our players that improving their play and having fun are the main objectives. As far as possible, we should refrain from yelling directions to the

players during games, as it will hamper their ability to make decisions independently.

Reduce player dependence on adult guidance through “Guided Discovery”

In practice sessions, coaches should try to allow players to make mistakes and ask players how they could do things better and guide them to the correct answers, rather than telling the players what to do. This will help the players’ ability to solve problems and reduce their dependence on adults for guidance during games.

Teambuilding

At the U9/10 age group, players recognize the fact that they are part of a team and they begin to associate themselves with their team. This is a great opportunity to teach young players about the value of teamwork and what it means to be part of a team (i.e. trusting your teammates, not criticizing them, etc.). Certain fun teambuilding activities can be done during some practices, especially in the beginning of the season when players may not be familiar with each other.



U9/10 Physical Development

Physical development is not a high priority for U9/10 soccer. Encouraging all players to play and participate and give their best is really all that's required.

- Just play soccer
- Introduce stretching (static and dynamic) in some practices

In terms of fitness, there is no need for players in this age group to run laps or sprints. Relay races with the ball and 1 v 1 duels are good exercises for building fitness while working on ball skills. But for the most part, just let them play soccer and soccer related games and activities during practice sessions.

U9 & U10 Player Development Resources

Mass Youth Soccer week by week practice plans offering proper coaching technique and example drills.

http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaching/u10_dynamic_activities.aspx

More information about player development can be found on the Medfield Youth Soccer player development web page at:

<http://www.medfieldsoccer.org/content/player-development-0>

Acknowledgements

Medfield Youth Soccer wishes to thank Marlborough Youth Soccer and its Board of Directors for their work developing these player development guidelines.

