



Table Rock SC Curriculum

Technique over tactics. Often if a soccer coach can't play the sport or can't demonstrate the demanding technical approach of the game to a player, the coach will focus on tactics.

Even though it gets a bit confusing on the fact that players for one of the two sports actually use their feet...I will leave it at, the two sports are extremely different in nature, numbers of referees and coaches, culture, lines on the field, global reach and popularity, size of field, shape of the ball, ways to score, points when scoring, rules, attire, the ability of the players to dictate the pace and/or outcome of the game, equipment, overall approach, actual playing time, length of periods, strategy, and player development. New coaches to soccer, continue to blur those glaring differences between the two sports. The idea of a soccer player blasting the soccer ball down the field like a hopeful, last minute hail-mary pass by a football player is confusing at best. The act of each soccer player individually attempting to move the ball forward, forward, forward at all costs by the process of kicking and dribbling, mirrors the notion of American football "moving the chains" down the gridiron.

Soccer is not a game of inches. You are allowed and encouraged to play the ball "backwards." In fact, in soccer while in possession, there is no penalty for the ball traveling backwards...There is simply the act of maintaining possession.

I have always thought of soccer as free flowing and unfolding, each game being similar to the previous but unique in and of itself, like a play or performance on stage. Where all the players know what to do, they may flub their lines or miss their mark, but there are no timeouts, just the rehearsals and chemistry between the players.

When in doubt kick it out! Another popular adage that is used by well intentioned, but inexperienced soccer coaches in an attempt to protect their team's goal. Can you imagine that type instruction in, say, Basketball?! The basketball player dribbles up the court, gets pressured by the opposition and immediately hurls the ball into the stands! Whew crisis averted...It seems a strategic approach with a few holes in it... the initial desire was to keep the opposition from getting the ball...and now they have the ball...not because of anything the opponent did, but because of what was not done in training.

So two things: One, voluntarily handing over ball possession to the opponent... because you are concerned the opponent may score on your team, seems right out of your opponent's playbook. Secondly, if you never allow a player to fail by having possession taken away, they will never learn or develop the necessary skills to remedy the situation properly. Which is, everyone will lose possession at some point, what do you do after you lose possession? Multiply this coaching tactic over an entire game or season and you will plainly see why soccer is a game of mistakes.

A Game of Mistakes

Earlier, I mentioned soccer was not a game of inches. It is largely a game of mistakes. Meaning the team that makes the most typically struggles to perform well in a match. Even when one team is inferior to the other, if the stronger team creates more mistakes, they will often lose regardless of ability.

Defense first Only attack if you can get back.

In order to have successful attacks where you are not running the same three players into the ground with thru-ball after thru-ball, you must attack in numbers. Building up possession from your defensive end to the opponents. Everyone defends and everyone attacks as a unit. When possession is lost, teach your players to get “behind the ball” In other words, get between the **ball** and the **goal** you are protecting, then look for “runners” into your area and/or someone to mark.

Club Style: Keep the ball on the Carpet...as much as possible.

Delivered in the air, the ball is more difficult, and usually takes more touches to control than passed and received on the ground. Players look to receive and release. Pass and move. Constant movement off of the ball and supporting runs.

Attack and Defend as a Team

If you can't get back, don't attack!

Everyone's main concern on the field should be to protect our goal. You could score 100 goals in a game but if the opponent scores 101, you lose.

Build your attack out of the back under possession

If/when you lose possession EVERYONE gets behind the ball and defends together in numbers executing the defensive principles

Ball Watching

Ball watching is a bad habit developed in training sessions that have lots of stoppages of play, lectures and lines. After a player passes the ball to a teammate they should, “follow their pass” meaning continue moving towards their teammate that received their pass in support or look to overlap their teammate giving them more options. Standing and watching is to the detriment of both players, the momentum of the attack is destroyed, and the approach becomes, every man for themselves. Meaning each individual gets the ball then runs with it until it's taken away and possession is lost, or manages to get it to a teammate further up the field, instead of working together as a unit.

Support vs, Running away. Many players will stand far away from their teammate with the ball, and hold up their hand or simply call the players name over and over. Often times once a player gains possession, their teammates abandon them making a straight run for the opponent's goal...What they should be doing is running towards their teammate with the ball, in a supporting run. That way, if possession is lost, we now have two players able to win back possession and if we maintain possession, we now have more players involved in the attack.

Creativity.

All coaches/players in soccer are really trying to find are 1v1 opportunities on the field and exploiting them. The need for individual creativity is a must in soccer, however that type of approach should only be taken in the opponent's third of the field (your attacking end) and not whenever a 1v1 opportunity presents itself, anywhere on the field.

“The run, dictates the pass”, so if a player is not on the ball, they should be moving into a position to receive it. Or moving in order to draw a defender away from their teammate in possession of the ball. If I have the ball, I will see movement before I hear my name called or see a hand raised 40 yards away.

If/when their Opponents go out of play, it is not an opportunity for reflection. If it's a corner-kick, goal-kick, or throw-in - take it quickly!

Look to win the first ball, the 50/50 challenge. If not, then look to win the second or third...

The three second rule: If you lose possession of the ball it is your job to get it back. If everyone spends up to 3 seconds pressing after possession is lost, those periods of play will diminish over time.

Play the way you are facing. Often the most obvious easiest pass is the best one to make...Soccer is a game of mistakes the team that makes the most tends to lose the match.

Building out of the back vs boot-ball

Boot-ball is adopted by coaches that simply want to protect their goal at all costs by instructing players to kick it away from our goal, towards the opponents. In theory, this may make sense however in practice it makes very little.

Why? Because what once was 100% possession, is yet again up for grabs. Out WIDE and UP is the easiest way to get out of your defensive third with possession.

Goalkeepers should master the throw before attempting to drop kick the ball. The throws should be quick and out wide to waiting players near the sidelines.

Table Rock SC Warm-Ups

Foundation – 50

Toe-Taps – 50

Pairing the 'V', 25 Left / 25 Right

Rollover, 25 Left / 25 Right

Pullbacks, 25 Left / 25 Right

Juggling

Ages 4 to 9

Mostly random technical repetitions, psychologically friendly and positive, simple combinations and decision making activities.

Exercises should focus on endurance, rhythmic movement, flexibility and running mechanics

Individual basic skills with an emphasis on keeping ball possession.

Keep Away Games.

A lot of balance and coordination exercises.

Correcting bad habits with good ones. ie. no kicking with their toe, reaching across the front of their body with their dominant foot to receive a pass, instead of lifting their weaker foot to trap the ball, not taking shots or passing with weaker foot, etc.

Encouraging, Free play – movement education – trial and error – discovery – experimentation!

Why are there no Goalkeepers in Academy?

Young children have great difficulty visually tracking moving objects, especially if they are in the air. Most children younger than 10 are very reactionary in their movement behavior and will duck or throw hands in front of the face if the ball comes toward the head. Anticipating where the ball might be played is a skill that has not yet developed and that does not really develop until age 9 or 10. Prior to age 9, visual tracking acuity is not fully developed. Players have difficulty accurately tracking long kicks or the ball above the ground. Beginning at approximately age 10, one's visual tracking acuity achieves an adult pattern. Striking the ball at a small target accurately is a challenge for all children. Goalkeepers restrict the opportunities to score goals to a select few players. Young children stuck in goal will not develop goalkeeping skills and are more likely to get hit with the ball than actually save it. It is important to wait until children are better able--physically, mentally and emotionally--to handle the demands of being a goalkeeper.

There are no goalkeepers in the 3v3 and 4v4 format through age 8; goalkeeping is then introduced in the 6v6 format beginning at age 9.

This still allows plenty of time for children to grow up and be the best goalkeepers they can be; most likely keeping them engaged in playing soccer for many years to come.

Once players take on the goalkeeper role, they tend to grow in the position through three general stages. Those stages are

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Foundation – 50

Toe-Taps – 50

Pairing the 'V', 25 Left / 25 Right

Rollover, 25 Left / 25 Right

Pullbacks, 25 Left / 25 Right

Juggling

Ages 10 to 14

More combinations on attack and defense.

Create many decision-making environments.

Advanced competitive skills against match opponents.

Tactically work on the roles of attack and defense and the basic principles of play.

Ages 15 to 23

Positional application of ball skills.

Intense fitness training now becomes a part of the training routine. Much of the focus of training is now on group and team tactics.

Fitness training with an emphasis on speed, range of motion, strength and stamina.

Emphasize now the mastery of ball skills and the match application of them.

Systems are not the focus, but rather the framework.

The decisive factor is the player and his or her individual qualities, specifically technical expertise.

There is a difference between a training session and practice.

Practice or Homework, is time with the ball that a player spends alone or with a friend or two.

Players are encouraged to practice on their own, knowing that self-motivation provides the best results from practice.

A Training Session is with the team and the coach and should replicate the game. It is necessary to be realistic with the activities in a session plan according to the age group being instructed.

Are Your Training Sessions Effective or a Waste of Time?

In order for your training to be effective, the drills must be conducted at 100-110% of the player's maximum ability for noticeable change to occur.

The normal youth soccer player, albeit very athletic, is extremely inefficient and ineffective in their technical running form.

If the player is running incorrectly, the issue will only continue until changed, therefore the progression for speed will be much less effective. Here are some simple cues for linear speed training (cues for change of direction and quickness are different):

- 1.Arms must work from chest to clear the hips
- 2.The foot must make ground contact underneath the hip to push backwards
- 3.The player's posture must be such, that the hips extend forward, generating efficient acceleration

If you train at a speed at 80%, then your body only knows 80% to be its highest speed potential.

Quick changes made by simple cues, will give an immediate progression of speed ability.

Training at this level of intensity, the duration, recovery time, and volume must be appropriate.

The players should sprint short enough distances to enable 100% speed, you must give their body the ability to recover so that they can repeat that same intensity, and the volume must be high enough to create a positive change and low enough so that the body is not in a chronically overloaded state.

Here's an example:

- **Duration = 40 yards**
- **Recovery = work to rest ratio, for every :01 second sprinting give :30 recovery**
- **Volume = for youth players, within general training sessions, the volume should be kept to 200 yards of total quality/high intensity sprinting.**

So, 4 sets of 40 yard sprints, with 2 minute rests in between each sprint.

Or Sprint 40 yards, rest 2 minutes x 4

All speed training should be performed at the beginning of the session, just after the players are warmed up.

Have a technical objective within the speed drills performed that aligns with your objectives for the rest of the practice.

Make sure that these drills are performed with quality technique to create good habits.

Lastly, but most importantly, the speed training, just like any other skill, must have clear and concise coaching objectives for effective change to take place.

Principles of Attack

1st Attacker Penetration

2nd Attacker Support 1st Attacker, Mobility – unbalancing (off-the-ball runs, overlaps)

3rd Attacker provide Width and/or Depth Best place to run into is an area that was just vacated

Principles of Defense

1st Defender :Pressure– immediate chase, get between the goal and the ball, NO STABBING

Delay – don't try to take the ball, they'll give it to you.

2nd Defender Depth– support (angle and distance) Watch for off ball runs

3rd Defender Balance – get ball-side

The training environment should lead to self-reliant players who think and communicate for themselves during a match.

Players who are over-coached in matches become robotic in their performance and cannot make tactical decisions fast enough.

Slow decision making leads to reaction players instead of anticipation players. The over-coaching comes not only from coaches, but spectators who constantly yell out to the players what to do and when to do it. This environment of coaches and parents making soccer decisions for the players during a match has led to a weakness in transition. The goal is to develop anticipation players – players who can read the game and are mentally one step ahead in the game. This sort of player evolves in a healthy soccer environment. That environment requires less coaching during matches and better coaching during training sessions. This approach has an over emphasis on a particular system of play and the team formation to execute that system. Transition in training session activities must become an ever-increasing aspect as they mature.

The Shot Blocker Stage is one where the player simply reacts to shots after they have been taken. He or she tries to get into position to make saves and this is sometimes merely blocking a shot and not making a clean catch. The attacking role of the shot blocker is usually just a punt of the ball downfield.

The Shot Stopper Stage, a player has progressed to not only making saves after a shot is taken but also being able to anticipate shots. With this improved ability to read the game, the shot stopper gets into better positions to make saves and begins to stop shots from being taken in the first place. The shot-stopper now comes out on through balls and collects them before a shot is taken. The shot-stopper also cuts out crosses before opponents can get to the ball. The shot-stopper comes out in one-on-one situations and

The Goalkeeper is highly athletic and physically fit. The goalkeeper is mentally tough, composed and confident. The goalkeeper has the full set of skills for the role to both win the ball (defending techniques) and to distribute the ball (attacking techniques). A full-fledged goalkeeper is indeed the last line of defense and the first line of attack. A goalkeeper not only makes saves but contributes to the attack with tactical and skillful distribution of the ball. The goalkeeper is physically and verbally connected to the rest of the team no matter where the ball is on the field. A first-rate goalkeeper is mentally involved in the entire match and is therefore physically ready when the time comes to perform. takes the ball off the attacker's feet.