

Characteristics of U12 Soccer Players

Sixth & Seventh Grade

Notable Quote - Dr. Marianne Torbert, Temple Professor and Director of the Leonard Gordon Institute for Human Growth through play, states: *"Play, well planned, can become a pleasurable means (tool) by which children can build a strong 'I can' feeling while gaining many of the foundation skills that make the process of gradually reaching our existing potential, not only one of survival, but one of expansion to deal effectively with an increasingly complex and stressful world."*

Psychomotor Development

- The average age for the beginning of pubescence in girls is 10 years with a range from 7-14; for boys, age 12 with a range from 9-16.
- Increases in the amount of exercise and the intensity does not necessarily increase aerobic fitness levels in children.
- Strength building activities require overloading the muscles to a greater extent than endurance activities.
- Flexibility training is key to the prevention of injury.
- Overuse injuries, burnout, and high attrition rates are associated with high-intensity children's programs that fail to stress skill development and learning enjoyment.
- Beginning to develop abilities to sustain complex coordinated skill sequences.

Cognitive Development

- Formal operational stage of cognitive development (Piaget).
- Beginning to think in abstract terms and can address hypothetical situations.
- Changes in thought processes are the result of an increased ability to acquire and apply knowledge.
- A systematic approach to problem solving appears at this stage; the game of soccer must present the ability to think creatively and solve problems while moving.

Psychosocial Development

- More TV/computer games, less unstructured play.
- Beginning to spend more time with friends and less time with parents.
- Popularity influences self-esteem.
- Whether a child enters puberty early or late has important psychosocial implications.
- Learning appropriate sex role.
- Most children seek peers that are most like them in age, race, sex and socioeconomic status.
- Opportunity to introduce the value of cultural diversity.
- Developing a conscience, morality and a scale of values.

- *Dr. Tom Fleck* – “We must work to create an environment to develop the American player’s growth and development! In the past we have tried to train the Dutch way, the Brazilian way, etc. We can and will together create the finest players in the world if we understand the growth, development and specific characteristics of our youth. Distributing the body of information from the “Y” License is the first step.”

CONCLUSIONS

- ◆ The player must be the focus of all decisions.
- ◆ The closer the organizational level is to the player, the more important that level is to player development.
- ◆ The different organizational levels must develop quality, open relationships with mutual respect for the benefit of all the players.

Ego's are out ... Development is in!

Typical U12 Training Session

- ◆ Should not exceed 1 hour and 30 minutes.
- ◆ Warm-up, small group activities, stretching. (approx. 15 min.)
- ◆ Introduce larger group/team activities (6-8 players)
- ◆ Continue with directional games. Play to targets and/or zones. (approx. 30 min.)
- ◆ Conclude with small-sided game 8v8 with GK's. (approx. 35 min.)
- ◆ Finish with cool-down activity (approx. 10 min.)