

Botkins SC

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Skill Priorities</u>
U-12	Continue with all U-10 curriculum Speed Dribbling in Traffic Ability to chip the ball Accurately play long passes Offensive/Defensive Heading Power/Accuracy Shooting <u>Tactical Priorities</u> Communication Basic Support Positions Receiving the Ball Away from Pressure Combination Play How and when to switch the point of attack Pressure vs Containing Proper 2 vs 2 roles Introduction to all roles in 3 vs 3

The period this age group is entering is often referred to as the dawn of tactics. Typically players of this age begin to understand the basic tactical situations of the game and are more aware of movement off the ball and the reasons for tactical choices. Problem-solving becomes systematic and these players tend to learn quickly. Children of this age typically are beginning to develop abstract awareness, so they can understand coaches when we talk about space and runs off of the ball. However, just because they understand these basic tactical concepts does not mean we should focus on these concepts entirely. Players are still developing technically at this age, especially as they go through growth spurts and awkward phases.

It is quite common to look out at a U12 field and see players that are physically the size of adults. Yet, other U12 players appear as if they could still be in the 3rd grade. These children are all growing at different rates and undergoing physical, mental, emotional, and social changes. The average age for the beginning of pubescence in girls is 10 years old with a range of 7 to 14; for boys it is age 12 with a range of 9 to 16. As coaches, we need to be sensitive to these changes and their social implications when coaching this age group. Some players may pick up skills quickly, where as others may struggle. However, it may be the case that this is simply the result of differences in maturation. In a year, the slower developer may surpass the player who developed earlier. For this reason we need to be patient and keep open minds about all players through these years. They are aware of their struggles more than anyone else as peer evaluation is omnipresent at these ages. When we see them struggling, it is important for us to help them and to keep the game fun.

Typical Characteristics of U12 Players

- *all children are maturing at different rates*
- *players need to warm-up and stretch---muscle pulls and other nagging injuries are common otherwise*
- *players will typically understand elemental abstract concepts and hypothetical situations*
- *they like to solve problems*
- *peer evaluation is a constant*
- *egos are sensitive*
- *coordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt*
- *technique still needs to be reinforced constantly*
- *playing too much can lead to overuse injuries*
- *playing too much and not feeling like they have a choice in the matter can lead to burnout and drop-out*
- *this is the dawn of tactics!*
- *keep asking the players to be creative and to take risks---we never want them to stop doing these things*
- *ask for feedback from them---they will tell you how things are going*
- *try to hand over leadership and ownership of the team to them*
- *keep it fun!!!*

The U12 Age Group

The effect of the role model is very important at this stage of development. Hero worship, identification with successful teams/players and a hunger for imaginative skills typify the mentality of this age. Players at this age can be extremely self-critical. This is the “Golden Age of Learning” and the most important age for skill development. Demonstration is very important and the players learn best by doing. This is an appropriate time to fully introduce and teach basic **Principles** of play:

Attacking Principles

Support

Penetration

Mobility

Width

Depth (length)

Spacing

Improvisation (deception, creativity)

Defensive Principles

Recovery (Immediate Chase)

Organization

Pressure

Cover

Balance

Compactness

Counter Attack

Role of Coach

The role of the coach in the U12 age group is to be a patient and motivating teacher. At this level, in addition to understanding technique, coaches should be able to provide environments conducive to problem solving (decision-making) by the players utilizing guided discovery methods. Specifically, individual and small group tactics should be the focus of the training sessions.

U12 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

Fertile period for learning...eager to learn
Ability to sequence thought and actions and perform more complex tasks...can simultaneously run, strike a ball and think!
Ability to use more abstract thought to meet the demands of the game (i.e. well-timed overlapping run)
Use their teammates to solve game problems
Training must replicate the game

Physical

Continue to gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance and power
Flexibility training is key to prevention of injury
More confident with physical technical demands above their waist (receiving with the chest; heading the ball)
Goalkeeping skills are becoming refined
Children continue to be in growth spurts
Overuse injuries occur when age appropriate development is ignored
Height can be well over 5 feet and weight can be 100+ pounds
The age range for the beginning of pubescence in girls is 7-14, with the average being 10 years of age
The age range for the beginning of pubescence in boys is 9-16, with the average being 12 years of age

Socially

Gender differences are more apparent
Whether a child enters puberty early or late has important psychological implications regarding relationships with their teammates
Spend more time with their friends and less time with their parents
Children tend to conform to peer pressure
Developing a conscience, morality and a scale of values

What to Teach U12 Players (Game Components)

Technique (skills):

Dribbling

- To beat an opponent (penetration)
- To possess (shielding)

Feints with the Ball

- Subtle body movements to unbalance the opponent

Receiving Air Balls with Feet, Thighs and Chest

- Away from pressure
- To beat an opponent

Heading to Score Goals and for Clearances

- Accuracy (direction)
- Timing

Finishing

- Chipping
- Bending
- Toe
- Introduce Half Volley and Volley Shooting

Passing

- Deceptive use of foot surface (toe, outside of foot, heel)

Crossing to Near Post and Penalty Spot Space

- Driven
- Flighted

Goalkeeping (skills)

Footwork for Goalkeepers

- Post to post (lateral)
- Forward

Throwing

- Side-arm
- Round-house
- Baseball

Kicking

- Drop-kick

Diving

- Step and Collapse (low)
- Step and slide onto forearms and thighs (forward)

Angle Play

- Fast footwork
- Body shape

Introduce Parrying and Boxing

- One hand
- Two hands

Psychology (mental and social):

- Teamwork
- Confidence
- Desire
- Mental rehearsal
- Intrinsic motivation
- Handling distress
- How to learn from each match
- Sportsmanship
- Parental involvement
- Emotional management

Fitness:

- Speed
- Strength
- Aerobic exercise
- Proper warm-up and cool-down now mandatory

Tactics (decisions):

- 2 v 1 through 3 v 3 attacking & defending
- Develop the principles of play
- Verbal & visual communication for all players
- Half-time analysis
- Beginning to identify potential roles for players (goalkeeper, defender, midfielder &/or forward)
- Commanding the goalmouth by the goalkeeper
- Near post play by the goalkeeper
- Saving penalty kicks
- Simple set play patterns
- Speed in setting up walls

Rules:

Offside

The Training Session

- ✓ The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities, as well as technical and tactical repetitive activities.
- ✓ The training session has a technical and/or tactical theme (focus). For example: dribbling technique and/or 1v1 decision making.
- ✓ Introduction to functional training (position specific) is appropriate.
- ✓ Small-sided directional games such as: 4v4, 5v4, 5v5, 6v5, 6v6 and 7v6 should be included as well.
- ✓ Training should always conclude with a 8v8 game with goalkeepers if possible. (7 field players and 1 goalkeeper on each team) The duration of the training session should be 90 minutes.