

Junior Football



The Onslow Way

Foreword

The Onslow Way captures the Onslow Junior Football Club's philosophy for junior football. It outlines for our players, coaches, and parents some of the messages that are most important to achieving success in the three major cornerstones of junior football:

1. Participation
2. Fun
3. Development.

Why produce *The Onslow Way*?

1. We wished to draw on a rich vein of literature that outlines current thinking and best practice approaches to (a) increasing enjoyment of the game and (b) developing better players for the future, and to share that information with our members.
2. We wish to express our aspirations, expectations, guidelines, and preferences for how we think junior football should be coached and played at OJFC.
3. We wish to describe what a great junior football experience would be like.
4. We wish to signal to our members some of the key messages that could make the biggest difference to that experience.
5. We hope the guidance will result in greater consistency of experience for our children across our teams and from year to year.

The messages in *The Onslow Way* apply to all junior age groups (Nursery Grade through to Grades 16/17) and all competition levels (JPL/Promo and District Leagues). They are all drawn from authoritative sources, reflecting international best practice and current wisdom. And they are all specifically aimed at developing our juniors' abilities and fostering their enjoyment of the "beautiful game".

The principles and guidance are consistent with the approach taken to junior football in many of the world's most successful football countries. We hope some of the messages are provocative and challenge current thinking. We particularly hope they challenge some of the traditional views and attitudes we have inherited, so that our junior football culture can change to more closely resemble those countries that are moving ahead. This will require adults to allow themselves to be challenged and to resist the temptation to approach junior football as if it were simply a miniature version of the adult game. Most of all, we hope the messages in *The Onslow Way* help to make positive changes to our children's football experience.

Although it contains several conduct-type messages, *The Onslow Way* is not a Code of Conduct. Everyone involved in football needs to be aware of, and sign up to, NZ Football's Code of Conduct http://www.nzsoccer.com/page/code_of_conduct.html

Neither is *The Onslow Way* a coaching manual or coach education resource. Coaches should instead enrol in the NZ Football coaches' courses. Refer to the Capital Football web site for course information <http://www.soccer.org.nz/> and enrol through the Onslow Coaching Coordinator <mailto:football@onslow.org.nz>

Bill Robertson (OJFC Club Captain)

I urge our players, coaches, parents, caregivers, and anyone else involved in junior football to read and reflect on *The Onslow Way* and its implications for the way we go about doing things. This will help ensure that the Onslow experience is the best it can possibly be for our young footballers.

Andrew Watson (OJFC President)
2008

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Objectives

1. Children will have fun, learn, and improve.
 - *Fun makes learning more effective and playing more enjoyable, regardless of the result.*
2. In addition to football knowledge and skills, our children will develop life skills, as well as desirable values, attitudes, and character. Our football is about developing the "person", not just the "player".
3. Our children will have a strong desire to always win, but winning will never be at the expense of their development, enjoyment, and well-being.
4. Our children will play free of fear and free of notions of failure.
5. Our football will be child centred, not coach centred.
 - *It is played for the children's enjoyment, not for the coaches or parents' enjoyment or glory. It will focus on the children's needs and interests, not on the interests or expectations of coaches or parents.*
6. Our children will enjoy a happy and healthy team culture.
7. Our focus is primarily on developing each individual player.
 - *In the junior years, the priority is on developing individual technical skills.*
 - *We will also strive to develop "team intelligence" within each player, develop good team play, and produce winning teams, but this is secondary to developing the skills of the individual player.*
8. Activities will be "age appropriate", suitable for the children's stages of physical, mental, and emotional development.
9. We will develop players who are creative and confident.
 - *This requires developing their initiative through letting them experiment without adult intervention. We aim to give children the freedom to play high-risk football, make mistakes, solve problems, and make their own decisions.*

Kids' football is all about the individual loving the game: Dribbling and shooting, playing games and scoring goals, experimenting and copying. It is very simple and lots of fun. Adult football is all about the team and results. It is physical, tactical, complicated, and very serious. - *Tom Strathern, Manchester United Academy.*

What Might Success Look Like?

We know we are being successful when ...

1. People remark that our players are enjoying their football and have good team morale.
2. Our teams are known for playing entertaining possession football.
3. We can visibly see *every individual player* improving their skills, their creativity, and their confidence.
4. Others comment on our teams' appearance and how sharp we look (incl. dress standards).
5. People remark on how well organised we are (in our practices, matches and, importantly, in our pre-match warm-ups and post-match cool-downs).
6. Onslow has a reputation within the Federation of our referees, coaches, and players having a firm knowledge and understanding of the Regulations and Laws of the Game and applying them conscientiously and with good judgement.
7. As a club, we are renowned within the Federation for our fairness and good sporting behaviour.
8. As a club, we are known for having a strong body of coaches who have up-to-date qualifications and are applying the latest coaching methods.
9. Our former players, in twenty, thirty, forty years' time will think of their junior football at Onslow as being a magical time in their lives.

Playing Football "The Onslow Way" – Some Key Characteristics

An Inclusive and Supportive Environment

1. We ensure that every player feels they are part of the team.
2. All players are given an equal opportunity to participate.
 - *It is the Club's policy to require equal playing/substitution time for all players over the season.*
 - *This requirement is in accordance with the NZ Football Code of Conduct and MUST be followed by all coaches, regardless of the desire to win matches.*
 - *There is no exemption for Regional League teams - the desire to maintain place or ranking in JPL and Promo Leagues must never compromise the need to ensure equal participation.*
 - *It is the Club's policy that no player "sits on the bench" for more than half of any one match.*
3. Our players are encouraged to experiment frequently, try out new things, and take risks without fear of failure.
4. Our players encourage each other.

A Well Organised Environment

1. Practices and match days are always well planned and well run.
 - *Coaches, managers, referees, and other team officials and helpers are aware of their roles and responsibilities.*
2. As much attention is given to pre-match preparations as to the match itself.
 - *Players and their families are aware of suitable pre- and post-match nutrition and diet.*
 - *Players are engaged in a football activity when they turn up (instead of standing around waiting).*
 - *Pre-match warm-ups are dynamic, fun for the players, and gradually build up to preparing the players for the match situation (see section on "Coaches (Saturday matches)").*
3. Players do cool-down activities, including stretches, after matches and practices (as appropriate for their age group).

Controlled Possession Football

1. Onslow players prefer to control the ball and keep possession rather than deliberately kick the ball out or away to "safety".
 - *When under pressure, they control and protect the ball to keep possession whenever possible.*
 - *Our teams play the ball out of defensive situations near our own goal.*
 - *This teaches our players to (a) work hard on keeping possession, thus improving their turning, shielding, and feinting techniques, (b) recover and provide support, and (c) remain calm and composed under pressure, in order to keep the ball off the opponents.*
 - *This simple approach to possession football develops skill and good team play; it breeds confidence among players.*
2. Onslow players always seek to maintain possession from throw-ins.
 - *Our players resist low-percentage, direct-attacking throw-ins down the sideline that give little chance of maintaining possession.*
3. Onslow goalkeepers frequently throw and roll the ball out to their players to build up attacks from the back.
 - *Our teams maximise the chances of retaining possession of the ball when distributed by our goalkeepers.*
 - *Our goalkeepers resist long, high, hoofing kicks that create an equal chance of either team gaining possession of the ball.*
4. Onslow team-play is characterised by intelligent passing play, along with individual acts of cunning and creativity.
 - *Our teams will favour controlled football over the high-tempo, aerial, kick-and-hope variety.*
 - *We concentrate on technique and on playing smart possession football.*
5. Backs are involved in the game even when the team is on attack.
 - *The backs should always be part of the game – not standing on the half-way line simply watching a game taking place ahead of them.*
 - *Our players will know it is alright to pass back the ball to the backs or to the goalkeeper to maintain possession or to initiate, or change the direction of, the team attack.*
 - *Our backs will be encouraged to overlap midfielders to participate in attacking moves.*

The Onslow Way for ...

Players (General)

In addition to abiding by NZ Football's Code of Conduct, we ask that our players

Please do

1. Play for your own enjoyment.
 - *But recognise you are also playing for your team-mates, so you should put in the effort for them, as well as for yourself.*
2. Play with commitment and the desire to improve, regardless of the level of football you're playing.
 - *Focus on the positive aspects of your play, and reflect on what you've done well.*
3. Accept that you will make mistakes from time to time, but never let them worry you.
 - *The only way to succeed is to make mistakes along the way. They are for learning from.*
4. Support and encourage your team-mates at all times.
5. Respect your coach, all referees, other officials, and your opponents.
 - *Accept that, like you, everyone can perform well and, like you, everyone can make mistakes at times.*
6. Practise your skills in your own time.
 - *You will learn new skills and tactics in your training sessions, but so much of your skills development will depend on how much of your own time you spend with a football, practising your skills.*
7. Be committed to always turn up for practice and matches, rather than let your team down (unless sickness, injury, or family commitments make this impossible).
8. Play hard, play fair, play well.

The Onslow Way for ...

Players (Saturday matches)

We ask that our players ...

Please do

1. Accept whichever position your coach puts you in.
 - *Playing in different positions is good for your development.*
2. Try to apply the skills you've learned and developed in real match situations.
 - *Try to take on opponents 1v1 – look for opportunities to beat a player rather than always passing the ball.*
3. Always seek to retain possession for your team and pass with a purpose.
 - *Don't deliberately kick the ball out or away to "safety" whenever you have the opportunity to control the ball instead.*
4. Always take scoring chances – shoot on sight.
 - *Don't be afraid to shoot when the shot is on for you, and never be afraid of missing a half-chance shot at goal. Missing a shot is not a mistake – failing to take the shot often is.*
 - *Back yourself in front of goal, and be prepared to try something unusual or unpredictable.*

The Onslow Way for ...

Coaches (General)

In addition to abiding by NZ Football's Code of Conduct, we ask that our coaches

Please do

1. Treat each child with respect.
 - *Let them voice their thoughts, and listen to them.*
2. Be relaxed, patient, and friendly with the children.
 - *Give the children pleasant memories. In years to come, you may not remember all of your players, but they will all remember you.*
3. Build the confidence of each individual player.
 - *Challenge, support, and reward every player.*
 - *Encourage, encourage, encourage.*
4. Regularly recognise and praise good effort. Praise appropriately. Focus your attention, and therefore your praise, on effort and behaviour rather than the outcome,¹ and reinforce what to do (rather than what not to do).
5. Make it safe for the players to make mistakes.
 - *Teach them that mistakes are for learning from. Help them to identify the problem and suggest their own solution.*
6. Build morale within the team.
7. Encourage good sporting behaviour and fair play, and present yourself as a role model.
8. Keep abreast of the laws of the game and of competition regulations.
9. Keep abreast of modern coaching theory (principles) and practice.
10. Familiarise yourself with age-based limitations, and apply age-appropriate advice, goals, and activities (see Guidelines at the end of this document).
11. Be organised and plan well.
12. In your dealings and communications with players and families:
 - Be enthusiastic – this is infectious
 - Be positive and up-beat
 - Be honest
 - Be clear and simple.
13. Make sure you enjoy your coaching.
 - *All of the above points will add to your enjoyment.*

¹ Research shows that focusing on effort is motivational and improves performance, whereas focusing on the result does not have the same effect.

Coaches (General)

We ask that our coaches ...

Try not to

1. Take things too seriously, get anxious, lose your sense of humour, lose your patience, show frustration, or respond negatively to any situation.
2. Show favouritism among players, form set views on any individual (whether positive or negative), or pigeonhole them as certain types of players.
3. Blind the children with science.
 - *Don't burden them with complicated ideas or guidance – keep it simple.*
 - *Two or three messages in a session or match are all that young players are usually able to take in.*
4. Over coach.
 - *Avoid bombarding them with instruction or continuous commentary.*
5. Comment on, or correct, every mistake or shortcoming.
 - *Give plenty of time to just let the children play. They get immediate feedback on their own performance from free play and the instant opportunity to try again.*
 - *Constant comment on mistakes will lower their confidence and create a fear of failure.*
6. Overdo praise or praise inappropriately.
 - *They won't believe you, and your credibility will suffer.*
7. Use junior football as a platform for showing off your tactical genius or for proving your coaching talent – it's about the children and the children only.
8. Treat junior football as a miniature version of the adult game.
 - *Although it is the same game, the junior football ethic is entirely different from that of senior football. Coaching juniors therefore requires a fundamentally different approach from senior football.*
 - *The key to successfully coaching juniors is knowing the difference.*
 - *Coaches not only need to know about football, they also need to know about juniors: how they learn and what the priorities are for their development.*
 - *The Onslow Way contains many key messages that underpin the junior football ethic.*

And please don't

1. Ridicule, humiliate, or embarrass children, and never be sarcastic to them.
2. Criticise children for making mistakes.
3. Tolerate divisiveness within your team.

The Onslow Way for ...

Coaches (Training sessions)

We ask that our coaches ...

Please do

1. Make your sessions fun.
2. Base most of your sessions around a central theme.
3. Balance a variety of activities (for interest and enjoyment) with repetition.
 - *Children enjoy repetition, which is beneficial for learning, practising, and mastering a skill.*
4. Discuss theory – ask the children the questions of what, why, where, when, and how.
5. Provide a balance of discussion, interactive problem solving, and free play within sessions.
 - *E.g. discuss, allow experimentation, observe, analyse, intervene with encouragement and facilitate problem solving, and then let them play.*
6. Demonstrate the skills (the "how") if you can.
7. Present messages in a variety of forms, e.g. drawing, speaking, writing, and doing.
 - *This will cater for most children's preferred learning styles: visual, auditory, read/write, or kinaesthetic.*
8. Match the practice task with the children's ability.
9. Adjust practice games and activities to ensure early success.
 - *E.g. alter the number or mix of players, the area, or the rules to allow the children to achieve the practice objective. Once achieved, you can then consider making it more challenging.*

Coaches (Training sessions)

We ask that our coaches ...

Seek to maximise

1. Opportunities for as much ball contact and manipulation as possible, including the use of "all ball" games.
2. Opportunities for all players to score goals.
3. Use of dynamic fun games (instead of static drills) to develop skills.
 - *The activities/games approach is better for developing skills, creativity, and decision making, as these activities more closely represent movements and situations found in the match than training based on manufactured situations.*

Drills versus Activities (Games)	
<i>Drills</i>	<i>Activities (Games)</i>
Static	Dynamic
Military	Unstructured
Lines	Free movement
Boring	Fun
No thought	Decision making
Age inappropriate	Age appropriate

Extract from American Sport Education Program, *Coaching Youth Soccer*, 4th Ed, 2006, Human Kinetics, ISBN 0-7360-6329-3

4. Opportunities for the children to learn by discovery
 - *Rather than instruct them in technique or tactics and demonstrating it yourself initially, describe a problem or objective and ask the children to solve it.*
 - *Use open questions initially (those that require other than a yes/no answer). Use leading questions if they're struggling.*
 - *Allow them to experiment before continuing discussion with them on what works well and what doesn't.*
 - *And remember that some things cannot be taught.*

→ When you give players the opportunity to think for themselves and come up with the answers, they'll often deliver the "lesson" themselves – you won't have to instruct them so much.
5. Opportunities for free play and fun with no coach intervention.
 - *Make extensive use of small-sided games (3v3 to 6v6,) with no adult intervention – let the game be the teacher. Don't always assign positions for small-sided games. Encourage, or require, "total football", i.e. ask players to play everywhere on the pitch, constantly changing position on the pitch.*

Coaches (Training sessions)

We ask that our coaches ...

Minimise or Avoid

1. The three L's: Lines, laps, and lectures.
 - *Standing in lines waiting their turn is boring for children and a waste of precious time. The activities/games approach aims to eliminate lines.*
 - *Running laps of the field is unnecessary and unproductive, especially for younger children. You can develop aerobic fitness and football skills at the same time through choosing appropriate practice games.*
 - *Receiving lectures is also boring for children. Limit discussion time for their attention span. In your discussions, try drawing from the children's knowledge, experience, and ability to "self-learn".*
2. Activities that don't involve a football (more so for the younger children).
3. Elimination games (i.e. where 'failure' leads to a player being sidelined until the game is over).
4. Using training sessions to play other teams in full-size matches.
 - *Training sessions provide a precious opportunity for developing players through small-number activities that maximise each player's involvement and give each player many touches of the ball.*

And please don't

1. Provide specialist positional training for selected individuals – give everyone a go.
 - *As children get older, coaches may wish to introduce position-specific training. If so, all players in the team should receive the training specific to each position.² This may broaden their development and widen their playing opportunities in future.*
2. Use football or fitness activities as punishments.
 - *Consider using "time out" instead when children are disruptive or lose focus.*

² The specialist goalkeeper role will be an exception.

The Onslow Way for ...

Coaches (Saturday matches)

Objectives

In junior football, matches are

- About participation, fun, and developing players ...
- ... with a winning attitude ...
- About competing well, playing well, and striving to win, within the rules and spirit of junior football...
- ...but not about "winning at all costs".

We ask that our coaches ...

Please do

1. Give proper attention to pre-match routines, including warm-ups.
 - *Engage players in a football activity when they turn up (instead of standing around waiting).*
 - *Locate team talks with regard to the weather conditions (e.g. out of the wind, in the sunshine on cold winter days, in the shade on hot days etc.)*
 - *Make warm ups active and dynamic – with all players moving all of the time (i.e. not standing still with intermittent movement or standing in line awaiting their turn).*
 - *Make warm-ups fun for the players and base them on the best practice advice of sports science and football experts.*
 - *Progress warm-ups from slow-tempo, small-movement exercises and gradually build up to higher tempo activities and larger motor movements (i.e. players should not begin sessions by taking corners or shots at goal).*
2. Give players equal playing or substitution time, treating the stronger and weaker players equally.³
3. Ensure each player who turns up for a match plays at least half of that match.³
4. Nurture the *desire* to win...
5. ...But focus on what happens during the game (e.g. effort and performance), rather than the result or outcome.
6. Set goals based on what you worked on in training to remain focused on development (e.g. trying to receive the ball seeing three quarters of the pitch).
7. Let the children play freely, make their own decisions, and make mistakes.
 - *Turn every negative aspect into a positive aspect, e.g. ask what didn't go so well and, therefore, what do we need to start doing or improve on?*

³ This is Club policy and therefore there is no discretion to depart from this requirement. The policy applies to all age groups and all grade competitions.

8. Maximise opportunities to rotate players in different positions throughout the season and across seasons.
 - *Juniors should feel comfortable playing anywhere on the pitch.*
 - *Expose their weaknesses and give them the opportunity to develop them into strengths, as well as to build on their existing strengths (e.g. rotate right midfielder to right back).*
 - *Rotating players around different positions will develop different aspects of their play and is essential for developing the whole player.*
 - *Juniors should not be assigned specialist positions for the duration of their junior football – specialist positions are for seniors, not juniors.⁴*
 - *It is silly to conclusively determine that a player, in their junior years, is strictly a "back", a "midfielder" or a "striker".*
 - *Positional rotation will reap benefits for the team (e.g. positional flexibility and more coverage for each position) and is most effective if achieved while maintaining team shape and stability.*
9. Emphasise the attacking role of backs and the defensive role of forwards.
 - *Some coaches find it useful to use the term "forwards" (instead of "attackers") and "backs" (instead of "defenders") to help convey the message that players in all positions have roles in the attacking and defensive phases of play.*
10. Always encourage players to shoot and take the half-chances.
11. After each match, leave the players with positive messages.

Minimise or Avoid

1. Playing with only one forward.
 - *This is too defensive for juniors. Children need to play attack-oriented football and learn to play in striker partnerships.*
2. Giving the players more than three messages at half time.

⁴ Specialist goalkeepers are an obvious exception to this rule. Even so, coaches may wish to look for opportunities for goalkeepers to play outfield now and then.

Coaches (Saturday matches)

We ask that our coaches ...

Try not to

1. Instruct too much from the sidelines or constantly tell the players what to do.
 - *Let the players make their own decisions and develop their own insights.*
2. Over-emphasise tactics (or issue complicated tactical instructions).
 - *Burdening children with tactics can straitjacket their play and rob them of their freedom and enjoyment.*
 - *Making complicated tactical adjustments during games is also inadvisable. It is beneficial to let the children get used to team shape and roles and ensure any tactical changes are well within their understanding and ability to execute.*

And please don't

1. Sacrifice developmental objectives for the sake of a win.
 - *Any coach can increase the chances of a win by compromising the objectives of fun, participation, and development.*
 - *A winning mentality is to be nurtured, but a win-at-all-costs attitude places winning ahead of participation, fun, and development and can be destructive in junior football. Think of the long-term gains for the individual and the team, rather than the short-term win for the team.*
2. Play more than the regulated number of players per side.
 - *The number of players required for each age grade is determined for several sound developmental reasons. Increasing the numbers above those specified is detrimental to the children's football development.*
 - *In cold weather conditions, more frequent rolling subs may be desirable, but don't agree to overpopulate the field. If weather conditions are too cold for players to be standing on the sideline, you should consider calling the match off for health and safety reasons.*
3. Tell a child s/he should have passed instead of shooting.
 - *Too few children are risk-takers, too few are learning the art of scoring goals, and it's too easy to discourage them from doing so. You can ask them to consider their options, but let them decide for themselves whether shooting is a good option.*
 - *Give approval to shoot any time, anywhere – this will increase their confidence and creativity.*

The Onslow Way for ...

Parents and caregivers

In addition to abiding by NZ Football's Code of Conduct, we ask that our parents and caregivers

Please do

1. Be your child's best fan.
2. Be supportive of *all* the players in your child's team.
3. Respect the game and everyone involved in it, including referees.
4. Focus on the positive.
 - *Compliment, praise, encourage, and congratulate your child and their team-mates.*
 - *Applaud good play, not only by your child's team, but also by the opposition.*
5. Always encourage your child to play by the rules, and foster good sportsmanship.
6. Teach your child to always aim to win but that effort, attitude, and development are more important than winning.
 - *Help them to win well ... and to lose well.*
7. Ensure your child is properly equipped for practices and match days (including being prepared for the weather).
 - *Children must not play or practise without shin-pads.*
 - *Proper long football socks must be worn and must be pulled up over the shin-pads (i.e. shin-pads must not be worn outside socks).*
 - *Proper football shorts should be worn at practices and matches; long shorts are not appropriate.*
 - *The full Onslow strip must be worn on match days.*
 - *Thermals, gloves, and beanies should be considered on cold days to ensure the children's comfort (but peaked, baseball-type caps are not to be worn).*
 - *Extra clothing is often needed to keep players warm and dry on the "subs bench".*
 - *Track suits/track pants can be worn at training on cold days.*
 - *Ensure they always take a full water bottle and encourage them to drink before, during, and after practices and matches.*
8. Be punctual.
 - *Lateness is disrespectful and lets the team down.*
9. Be supportive of your child's coach and team manager.
 - *They invest a huge amount of voluntary time and energy into your children's fun and development and are deserving of your help and support.*
10. Teach your child to support their team-mates by turning up for practices and matches.

Parents and caregivers

We ask that our parents and caregivers ...

Try not to

1. Point out mistakes your child may have made on the field.
 - *Children get immediate feedback about their own mistakes through their own senses – they usually know when they've made a mistake and don't need someone else to tell them (or, if they do, then it is the coach's role to help the players identify problems and come up with solutions).*
2. Issue instructions or directives to the players from the sidelines.
 - *Children need to solve their own problems on the field, so even coaches should restrict the number and nature of instructions from the sidelines.*
 - *Your instructions could contradict advice the coach has given to the players and therefore confuse the children or cause anxiety.*
 - *A good coach will limit the number of messages s/he gives the team at any one time – you shouldn't be adding to the coach's messages.*
 - *Children need to be able to play football free of constant commentary from adults. This is important for developing players who can think for themselves.*
3. Publicly criticise coaches, referees, or club officials.
 - *If you have any questions or concerns regarding the coach's methods, politely raise them with the coach, preferably out of the children's hearing. Give them the opportunity to explain their reasons for their approach.*
 - *Raise contentious issues through the correct channels.*

And please don't

1. Force an unwilling child to play.
 - *But, once they've decided to play, teach them about the importance of following through on their commitment and being reliable.*
2. Criticise or ridicule your child or other players.

Something is not right if you find yourself

- *Getting angry*
- *Shouting at the referee*
- *Grouping together with other parents getting angry, making lots of sarcastic comments aimed at the opposition parents, coach, or players.*

If you find yourself doing any of these things, then pull your head in. Believe it or not, your children don't like seeing their dad [or mum] in public getting angry.

- John Dybvig, *Sunday Star Times*, 6 July 2008

Age-appropriate Guidelines

The following specifications are not intended to be prescriptive. They are for guidance only; however, we would caution against significant deviations from the guidance, as they are based on a wide body of expert knowledge and opinion.

	Nursery Grade	Grades 7/8	Grades 9/10	Grades 11/12	Grades 13/14	Grades 15/16
General						
Warm ups and cool downs	Sufficient to use ball games for warm ups	Sufficient to use ball games for warm ups	Continue to use ball games for warm ups and introduce dynamic stretching and brief cool down with stretches	Continue to use ball games for warm ups and dynamic stretching – proper warm ups and cool downs with appropriate stretches	Give considerable attention to warm ups and cool downs (particularly dynamic stretches)	Give considerable attention to warm ups and cool downs (particularly dynamic stretches)
Discussion	As little instruction as possible – keep children activated	As little instruction as possible – keep children activated. Start asking them questions about what they need to do with the ball, why, and how.	Teach by questioning, share ideas, and explain in greater detail; introduce theory (principles)	Move more towards collective and individual problem solving; draw increasingly on what they already know	Continue discussing technical and tactical principles by allowing players to identify problems or objectives. Encourage the players to generate solutions and experiment with them	Continue discussing technical and tactical principles by allowing players to identify problems or objectives. Encourage the players to generate solutions and experiment with them

	Nursery Grade	Grades 7/8	Grades 9/10	Grades 11/12	Grades 13/14	Grades 15/16
Training						
Practice duration per session⁵	30 mins ⁶	45-60 mins	60-75 mins	60-90 mins	60-90 mins	60-90 mins
Skill-tactics balance	The primary emphasis for all junior age groups should be on individual technical skill development. Small-group tactics can be phased in as technique develops, and a light emphasis on whole-of-team tactics may be introduced in the older grades. While tactical play can be developed at any age, technical skill cannot. Therefore technical training should be heavily emphasised throughout the junior football years.					
Skills	<p>Lots of ball contact and scoring opportunities. Restrict training to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dribbling (priority) 2. Turning 3. Shielding 4. Running 5. Short passing 6. Shooting & finishing 	<p>Lots of ball contact and scoring opportunities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on NG list; dribbling remains the priority, incl. 1v1 2. Add feinting 3. Ball lifting and juggling 4. Receiving and controlling ground balls 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As per G7/8, with continued attention to dribbling and 1v1, incl. feinting 2. Receiving and controlling ground balls with all surfaces 3. Receiving and controlling bouncing balls 4. Introduce lofting and heading 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As per G9/10, with continued attention to dribbling and 1v1, incl. feinting repetitively 2. Receiving and controlling – all heights and all surfaces 3. Aerial balls of all variety incl. volleying 4. Attacking and defensive heading 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As per G11/12 2. Add to cover full range of technical skills 	Full range of technical skills
Tactics	None – simply point out which direction to attack (i.e. where the goals are)	Introduce concept of off-ball positioning and passing into player in space (but NOT one-tvos, wall passes yet)	<p>Continue to build on off-ball work and introduce pass and move.</p> <p>Some players will be ready for small-group attacking work (2v1, 2v2 etc), e.g. one-tvos, wall passes, overlaps</p>	<p>Small-group attacking (2v1, 2v2, 3v2, 3v3)</p> <p>Small-group defending: pressure, cover, and marking opponents or space (2v1, 2v2, 3v2).</p> <p>Build on the concepts of "in possession", "out of possession",</p>	<p>Concentrate on mastering small-group tactics (in preference to whole-of-team tactics)</p> <p>Limited introduction of complex set plays (e.g. corners, free kicks), as a lot of set play practice involving several movements</p>	<p>Whole-of-team tactics</p> <p>Build on set play work</p>

⁵ The general rule-of-thumb is that each training session should not exceed the length of the Saturday matches.

⁶ The training sessions are part of the Sunday morning programme. There should be no additional training for Nursery Grade teams.

	Nursery Grade	Grades 7/8	Grades 9/10	Grades 11/12	Grades 13/14	Grades 15/16
			<p>Defending 1v1 (effective pressuring), and introduce concepts of covering and marking</p> <p>Introduce the concepts of "in possession", "out of possession", and transition play.</p>	and transition play.	<p>will not come off for lack of technique – honing technique is always a good use of training time</p> <p>A light introduction to some of the simple whole-of-team tactical principles (e.g. compactness on defence and stretching the opponents' defence when on attack)</p>	
Body movement	Variety of (large) body movement patterns that promote agility and balance (balancing, running, jumping)	Variety of (large) body movement patterns that promote agility and balance (eye-foot and eye-hand coordination)	<p>Introducer finer coordination and flexibility exercises (running, jumping, landing, turning, twisting, spinning, balancing etc)</p> <p>Football coordination / ball familiarisation</p>	<p>Continue with coordination and flexibility exercises (running, jumping, landing, turning, twisting, spinning, balancing etc)</p> <p>Football coordination / ball familiarisation</p>	Football specific movement, i.e – jockeying; sideways movement; spinning off cones/players; and speed, agility, and quickness training (e.g. basic ladder work, hurdles, poles etc.)	Football specific movement, i.e – jockeying; sideways movement; spinning off cones/players; and speed, agility, and quickness training (e.g. basic ladder work, hurdles, poles etc.)
Fitness training	None, and no sprinting	None, and no sprinting	Endurance training is best incorporated into practice games (incl. 4v4 games)	Speed, strength, and aerobic exercise is best achieved by playing age appropriate games adapted to achieve the fitness outcomes	Speed, strength, acceleration, aerobic, and anaerobic training is best achieved by playing age appropriate games adapted to achieve the fitness outcomes (i.e. instead of the likes of shuttle runs)	As before

	Nursery Grade	Grades 7/8	Grades 9/10	Grades 11/12	Grades 13/14	Grades 15/16
Saturday matches						
Numbers per side⁷	4-aside (no GK)	5 aside	7 aside	9 aside	11 aside	11 aside
Formations	No formations	No formations	Use simple formations (e.g. 3-3, 2-2-2, or 3-1-2)	Use simple formations (e.g 3-3-2)	4-4-2 builds a solid foundation and can be used flexibly. Try other formations, but don't exceed the players' ability to grasp the concepts or their physical ability to play within the demands of a given formation	
Positions	No positions – players play everywhere; bunching is normal	No positions – players play everywhere, but bunching will continue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely on small-group attack principles to create space for team passing 	Introduce positions and encourage players to carry out their positional responsibilities – but also rotate players around different positions. (Bunching may still continue)	Greater emphasis on carrying out positional roles – aim for effective creation and use of space through positional discipline	Require players to carry out positional responsibilities but encourage temporary switching of positions during play (as appropriate)	
Rotating players around positions	N/A	N/A	All players should be rotated around different positions right up to the Under-16 age group.			
Subbing	Sub frequently during matches	Sub often during matches	Consider subbing e.g. 4 players for up to half a match each	Subbing up to (but no more than) half a match might be normal practice		
Tactical adjustments	N/A	N/A	N/A	Make only minor adjustments, in line with what they've already learned	Make limited adjustments, but don't exceed the players' ability to grasp the concepts or their physical ability to put the tactics into practice. Try to relate your tactics to training.	

⁷ These numbers are based on Capital Football's medium-term plans for the region. We expect the transition to these team sizes to be achieved by 2010.

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