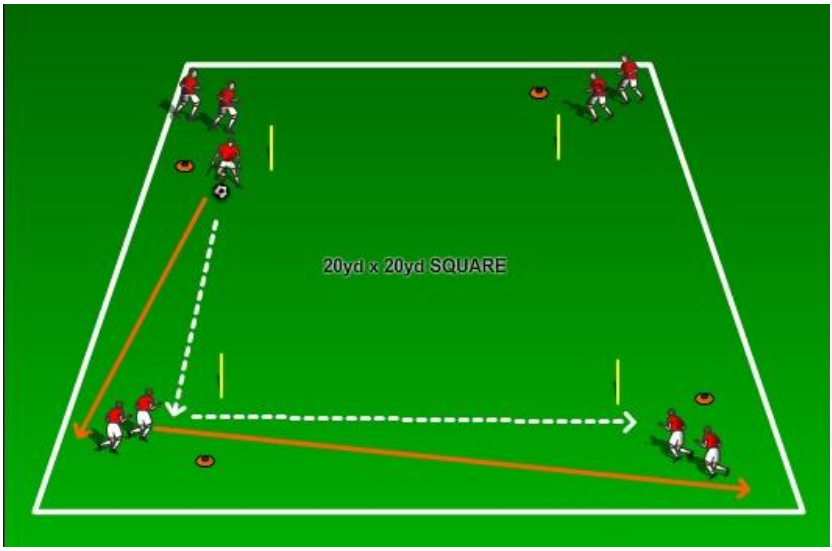
Questions & Answers About Our Youth Program.

CAPITAL SOCCER ASSOCIATION

"It is all about development"

Technical Handbook (2014-2015)



This handbook contains information that will help parents understand the setup and philosophy of the CSA Youth Soccer Program, from training methods to team selection.

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Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank all of the coaches and administrators from Capital Soccer who have helped contribute to this handbook with their valuable feedback. There are many people who work tirelessly for the club, and I would like to thank them for all that they do to make soccer happen for so many young players in the Lincoln area.

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Introduction:

There have been many questions asked of Capital Soccer over the past few years, with regards to the setup of the youth program. I therefore wish to put in writing some issues that are close to my heart regarding the success of the players within our club.

Capital Soccer Association is committed to implementing a Long Term Development Plan. As Youth Director, I wish to use my experience with Long Term Development (LTD) to better the players within CSA. This experience includes my time spent with professional and amateur youth clubs/academies in England and the United States. The study of development via training has recently consumed my focus and has always intrigued me as a developing coach. At all age groups, youth to adult, the benefits of a LTD plan are essential to developing a complete soccer player and citizen.

LTD and winning championships are often seen as polar opposites. In fact they are not opposites; they are truly connected when LTD is the focus of your programming, but disconnected when championships are the focus. LTD promotes championships, but championships alone do not necessarily bring forth long term development. First, we know that LTD requires thoughtful and timely changes, and making changes for the betterment of the club's programming and its most important members, the players, is my primary concern.

Our LTD plan will not work without the support of every player/parent/coach within the club. You must understand the influence that your support has on the development of every player within the club. Consequently, do not underestimate your contribution to the fulfillment or destruction of this plan. There may be changes. This happens when putting in place a long term vision. As we progress we may see things occur that necessitate changes to our LTD programming. I know change brings forth apprehension, doubt, and fear, and encourage you to contact me to discuss these issues in more detail.

`The only consistent part of development is change.'

Thanks for being part of the Lincoln soccer community.

Jeremy Kester
Youth Director

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Club Culture:

⇒ What is Capital Soccer Association?

CSA is an umbrella organization that consists of players, parents, coaches, and administrators. CSA tries to encourage young players to grow physically, mentally, technically, and tactically in a fun, fair and challenging environment.

⇒ What kind of soccer does the CSA Youth Program offer?

The goal of CSA is to create youth soccer teams based on several factors including, but not limited to, sportsmanship, coachability, skill, commitment, and age division. From a competitive aspect, CSA competes in the Eastern Nebraska Soccer Association (ENSA) league, and various regional tournaments. Younger players will have the opportunity to play in a less competitive environment against local and in-house competition.

⇒ Why does everyone within the club wear the same style of uniform?

CSA teams have their own identity when it comes to the players and the team coach. However, they are all part of a greater unified identity that is the club as a whole. As a player grows up, he or she may play/train with a different CSA team. Having a common look/uniform allows players to be placed in the best environment for their development without burdening the family with the additional cost of buying new uniforms.

⇒ Why will players sometimes train with players of other ages and from other teams within the club?

There is a widely-held belief that playing with older players is the only way to improve. There is certainly some truth behind this belief, although there are some issues that need to be taken into account. As players get older, the speed of the game increases. However, this does not necessarily mean that the skill level increases. Therefore, an older player may benefit from playing with younger players to work on more difficult skills, while at the same time, younger players may benefit by playing at a faster tempo. We do not expressly encourage players to play

with older or younger competition, but in the correct environment, it can be greatly beneficial to the players involved.

There are times when you will see two teams training together. This helps to increase the level of competition within a controlled environment, while at the same time serves to enhance the development of a club culture. Players get to know each other and other coaches, which helps them immensely in the development process.

This practice helps the club to function smoothly if one coach cannot make a practice session. Another team coach can step in and run a session with the advantage of already knowing the players with whom he or she is working with.

⇒ What is the role of the Youth Director?

The Youth Director is responsible for creating an environment in which all players can develop. This involves selecting coaches, implementing a curriculum, and making adjustments where necessary to serve the needs of each player. Because of the large number of players within the Youth Program, some decisions (such as practice time or team selection) may not seem to be best for an individual player or family. While it is important to communicate these issues with the Youth Director and with the club, it is also necessary to consider that each decision is made for the collective good of every player within the organization.

⇒ What should I do if I have a question or a concern?

It is really important to communicate any issues that arise as soon as possible, so that they do not become an even bigger problem. Any questions should be raised in person where possible, or by phone/email if an in-person contact is not an option. It is best to talk to the team coach first, followed by the Youth Director and the club's administrators.

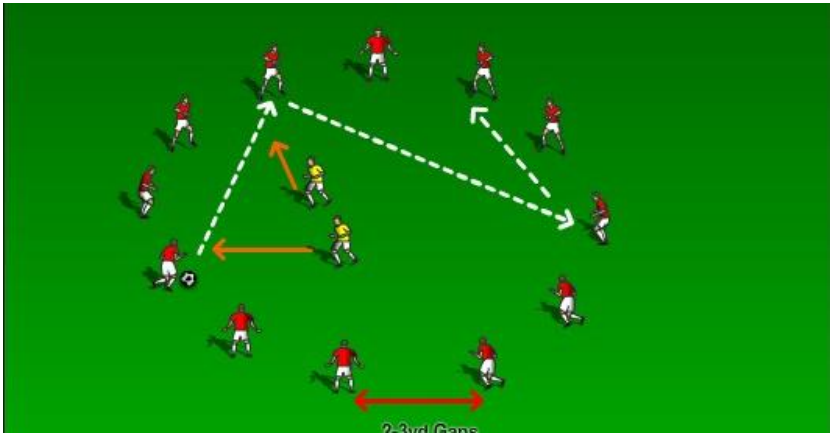
Micro Soccer (U5-U6):

Micro Soccer is an introduction to the Capital Soccer Association and for many of our young players, soccer in general. Micro Soccer runs each season for 8 weeks, and involves a 1hr session every Sunday afternoon. Teams are usually organized by age and location, although this is often determined by the numbers involved.

Micro Soccer is led by a team of selected trainers, with the help of some volunteer parent-coaches. The trainers follow a curriculum of games put together by the Youth Director, and finish every session with an open game of soccer. Groups are usually very small (<10), which allows each child to get the attention they need from the coaches.

From the sidelines, it may appear that the kids are just playing games. However, it is important to understand that each "game" has a specific area of development in mind. The areas of development are not simply soccer skills. In Micro Soccer, we also focus on movement skills, listening skills, and social skills.

If you are interested in getting involved in the sessions, you are more than welcome to jump in… literally! Our coaches will welcome your participation in any of the games. Our only request is that you can act like a 5yr old! We tell our coaches that if they can have fun playing each game, the kids will follow accordingly!



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CSA Youth Academy (U7-U10):

The CSA Youth Academy is training for players to prepare them for the challenges of select soccer. CSA youth teams are guided through a 30-part curriculum under the guidance of their coach. The curriculum is focused on learning essential techniques, as well as basic tactical principles such as width in attack, or depth in defense.

As mentioned earlier in this handbook, it is essential to master techniques as quickly as possible, because the pace of the game gets faster with age. As a college coach, I can attest to there being many promising young players who never achieve their individual goals at the college level because of a lack of technical ability. It is therefore the main priority for the CSA Youth Academy to provide its players with the tools they need to succeed at the highest level.

Teams in this age bracket face competition from local and regional teams, but there is no specific emphasis on winning at this age. We hope that our teams experience winning many games during this time, but we also value the lessons of losing games in a healthy context. This pamphlet will continue to outline the principles of long-term development, and this is something that the club is committed to following completely.

Coaches for our academy teams are encouraged to pursue nationally recognized coaching licenses, and are given the tools they need to give their players the best education possible on the field.

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⇒ What is the focus of the U7-U10 Academy?

There is a saying "You cannot play in the orchestra if you cannot play your own instrument". This holds true also for soccer. At this young age, CSA training will focus on an individual's technical ability with the future in mind for each individual. Our coaches will be invested in the players' individual skill development with the hope that a lifelong love of the game will be developed.

⇒ How does my child's team learn to play together and develop team chemistry with this individualistic approach?

This is where we need to adjust our thinking slightly. The traditional 'team' focus versus an 'individual' focus has held back development. We must understand that a good player can go play on any team at any time, so we must focus on the individual and create good players, not necessarily good team chemistry.

When we watch children play on their own (which does not happen as much now as it used to), they play in games and they do not care about team chemistry. They do not say "*I play better with so-and-so*" or *"we play hard for one another*". These are adult phrases that come from the adult game (or the latest sporting movie). Children will play with whoever is on their team, and it is important to understand that their team will go through numerous personnel changes as they get older.

We do teach principles of the game to help the players work well with each other. Each principle is introduced at a specific time in the development time-line to maximize the players' ability to consume the information.

⇒ What is the curriculum?

Our U7, U8, U9, and U10 teams follow the same curriculum, progressing further each year. Each session is created with a single technical focus. From the warm-up to the final exercise, the players are led through a series of drills and games that focus on a single topic. At the end of each session, the players should be able to know three main learning points from the lesson. Coaches will instruct other points, and will be able to put their own spin on each session, but the basic structure will remain the same.

⇒ Why a consistent curriculum?

Like every Academy or place of education, we need a curriculum. As a Club Academy we want technique and tactics introduced at appropriate times in a child's development. Our trainers will make this occur by following our defined lessons.

⇒ Will the coaches of my child's team be educated themselves?

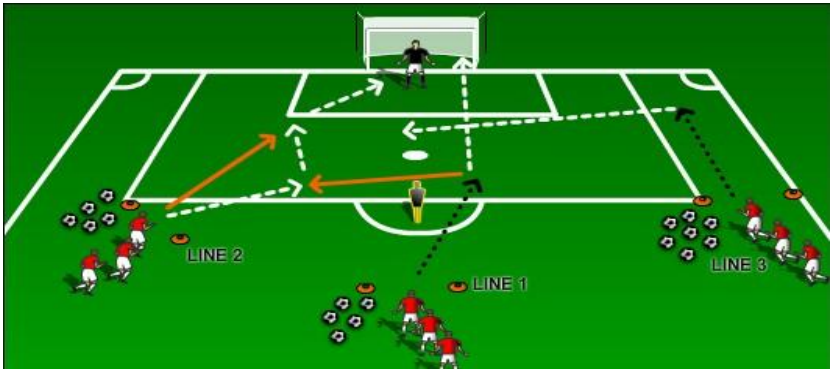
CSA is committed to coaching education. The Youth Director will be responsible for educating all coaches within the youth program, and the club will also help its coaches to progress through the national coaching licenses as they continue in service to the club.

⇒ What is the practice schedule like?

U9 and U10 teams will train twice a week for approximately 75 minutes. U7 and U8 teams will train once a week for 60 minutes with the option of a second 60 minute training session later in the week. We believe that practice is the most important element in a player's development, but we recognize the importance of children playing in multiple sports at this age. We therefore limit the amount of time our players are on the field, but encourage players to continue practicing in their own time. Private / Small-numbered training sessions are also available.

⇒ How much will my child play?

Our goal is to have every player participate in at least one half of every game. Coaches will substitute freely during each game to get each player on the field as much as possible. Players will likely play more than one position, which will help them to develop further.



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Long-Term Athlete Development:

Below you will find Istvan Balyi's seven-stage progression to long-term athlete development:

Seven Stages of Long-Term Athlete Development	Active Start	Early entrance (Early childhood play, ***Micro Soccer***)
	FUNdamentals	6-8 Years (***Micro Soccer***, ***Youth Teams***)
	Learning to Train	9-12 Years (***Youth Teams***, ***Youngest Select Teams***)
	Training to Train	13-15 Years (***CSA Select Soccer***)
	Training to Compete	16-18 Years (***CSA Select Soccer***)
	Training to Win	18+ Years (College, Professional Soccer)
	Active for Life	Enter at any age (Recreational Soccer Leagues)

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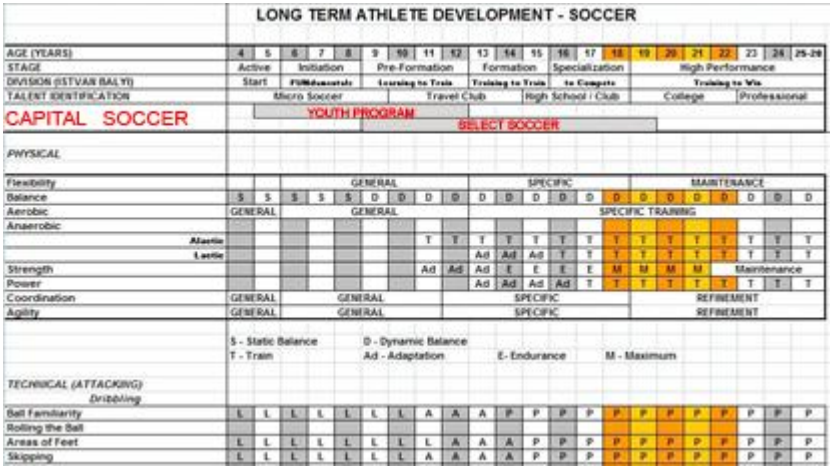
What This Means:

Istvan Balyi has worked with Canada's national sports organizations for three decades and over the past 20 years has created a model of athlete development that has been implemented all over the world. He has guided the sport organizations in Australia and Great Britain toward the implementation of this model within their day to day operations.

Istvan's work has included being the head sport science consultant for Australia's Olympic coaches leading up to the Sydney Olympics. His work in the United States has included being the lead Periodization (planning of training) expert at the IMG/Bollettieri Academy in Florida. This model crosses the boundaries of all sports. It can be modified to reflect the needs of early and late specialization sports as well as demonstrating the differences in development between male and female athletes within each sport. In general, it provides the skeleton for which a sport specific model can be built.

By utilizing the framework of Istvan Balyi's model, we have created a framework for CSA to follow throughout all age-groups. The biggest challenge is to overturn the trend of moving into the "*training to compete*" and *"training to win"* stages too early within our club.



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A Parents Role in the Development Process:

⇒ How should I encourage my son/daughter and their team?

Encouragement is what your child needs. There is however, a fine line between encouragement and coaching. Soccer is not an easy game to play. Your child is attempting to make decisions while manipulating a bouncing/rolling ball with their feet/thigh/chest/head. They do all of this while under pressure. It is therefore important to know that they will make mistakes and this is when they will need your support.

⇒ What should I say after a game to help them feel good about themselves and assist in the development process?

After a game, regardless of the score, it is important not to talk about the result. If your first comment to your child is about the score, they will soon feel pressured to win every game. Remember that we do not need to learn about *how* to compete and win until later in the development process.

At this age, the best thing you can say to your child immediately after a game is to ask whether or not they had fun. Rather than asking whether or not they scored, it is better to ask how they think they played. Finally, you can ask if they were able to do anything they had worked on in training during the game. All of these things will help them in the development process.

If your child's team has just experienced a bad game or result, try to find something positive in the game to refer to. Your child may have made some good passes, or worked hard in defense. Remind them that they have plenty of other soccer games to look forward to, and that there is no pressure on them to perform well every game or win every game.

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Parent Behavior:

We all know that parents are an important part of the developmental process. And we are aware that there are a few different types of parents. We see them depicted in humorous ways in cartoons and sitcoms, and we also see the dark side on national news from time to time. We also know the majority of parents are supportive of their children, the coach, the team, and everyone's efforts but sometimes the quiet-mannered mother or father can, during a game, begin to heckle/criticize the officials, scream out in debate of a call made or not made, storm/pace up and down the sideline, throw their arms in the air in disgust, ridicule an opponent, coach their daughter/son or another member of the team from the sideline, and worst of all, ridicule or make negative comments to their own children or those on the team. It happens. You have all seen it. Please don't be that guy or gal!

Respect the game and the developmental process by following these simple points:

1. Cheer for your team but don't ridicule the opposing team.
2. Learn the rules of the game. It will help you understand why certain situations take place.
3. BUT, because you have read the rule book, this does not give you permission to voice your opinion to the referee.
4. Be respectful of the referee's decisions.
5. As a parent try to be a "team fan" not a "my kid" fan.
6. Be a good role model, both through your actions and by censoring those around you whose behavior is unbecoming. People may not remember the final score, but they will remember the person on the sideline who embarrassed themselves or the group of parents from CSA who were disrespectful to the game.

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Parent Behavior:

DO ☑	DON'T ☒
☑ Encourage your child to participate in physical activity	☒ Do not yell at a child for mistakes or errors.
☑ Put an emphasis on learning, participation and effort, rather than winning.	☒ Do not shout abuse at officials or opposition players during a game.
☑ Support your child while he/she is playing simply by being there.	☒ Do not criticize officials, ridicule opponents, or put a coach down in a conversation with your child.
☑ Comment on how hard they tried, or something positive.	☒ Do not put all emphasis on winning.
☑ Leave the coaching to the coach	☒ Do not make exaggerated facial expressions or hand signals to the child while they are playing.
☑ Encourage your child to play on their own, or with a friend	☒ If you are playing with your child in the yard or the park, try not to make it into a definitive coaching session. Keep it fun so that your child can develop a love for the game.
☑ Model self-control and enjoyment if playing with them in the yard or the park.	

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Contact Information:

For more information about our Youth Program, or any of the issues discussed in this handbook, please contact us:

Youth Director:

Jeremy Kester

jeremykester@windstream.net

Club Administrator:

Jackie Wagner

administrator@capitalsoccer.com

Phone:

Telephone: (402) 464-5425

Fax: (402) 464-5425

Weather Line: (402) 464-6302

Mail:

Capital Soccer Association
P.O. Box 29435
Lincoln, NE 68529

Field Location:

Abbott Sports Complex
7600 N. 70th Street
Lincoln, NE 68504

Website:

www.capitalsoccer.com

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