

CYS U14 Suggested Coaching Curriculum

Principals of age appropriate development¹:

- Players must practice all different types of techniques at this stage.
- Strength and endurance should be worked in as part of the fitness training.
- Coaching methods have to consider and preserve players' health since they will be experiencing many changes due to puberty at this stage. Warm-ups and cool downs are essential as is dynamic flexibility.
- Players must develop discipline at this stage by following the instructions of the coach both during and outside training sessions.
- Between U12 and U14, roughly 75% of players will quit playing soccer. This dropout rate is seen across all sports and is a startling number that we need to be aware of at all times. These players need to be allowed to have fun and soccer should be enjoyable above all else.²

US Youth Soccer³ recognizes player development has four key areas: tactical, technical, physical and psychosocial. At this age group focus areas are:

Tactical: Application of attacking principals to create combination play and zonal defending.

Attacking principals include: creating space, giving support, creating width and depth, performing overlaps and diagonal runs, playing the ball forward, switching position and maintaining possession.

Technical: Focus on quality of passing and receiving techniques, ball control and finishing in big and small places.

Physical: General development of endurance, speed and strength

Psychosocial: Competition in individual and team situations. Focus in training.

Recommended Formations: 4-4-2, 4-3-3 or 4-2-3-1 with "flat defense"

4-4-2: two center defenders (center backs), two outside defenders, two center midfielders, two outside midfielders (wings), two forwards

4-3-3: two center defenders (center backs), two outside defenders, three midfielders, three forwards

4-2-3-1: two center defenders (center backs), two outside defenders, two holding midfielders, one attacking midfielder, two outside midfielders (wings), one forward (striker)

Note that "diamond" defenses are not preferred as they lean on the strength of the sweeper and do not lend to the development of all players. "All formations used by the teams in 11-a-side games must keep a back 4 line. The back 4 provides consistency in defense and allows space for the outside backs to move forward when attacking."⁴ For more, please see US Soccer Coaching

¹ US Soccer Coaching Curriculum, Dr. Javier Perez, 2011, US Soccer Federation

² MA Youth Soccer E Manual

³ US Soccer Coaching Curriculum, Dr. Javier Perez, 2011, US Soccer Federation

⁴ US Soccer Coaching Curriculum, Dr. Javier Perez, 2011, US Soccer Federation

Curriculum and “The Flat Back Four - An Introduction to Zonal Defending in a 'Flat Back' Arrangement”.

By end of U14 players should be capable of:

- Demonstrate technical competence:
 - Passing the ball at speed in reduced spaces while under pressure
 - Short and long accurate passes - Passing on the ground accurate at 20 yards. In the air at 25 yards
 - Ability to head ball up or down
 - Heading after jumping
 - Shooting consistently on target
 - Sharp, quick turns
 - Strong shielding
 - Solid tackling
- Application of attacking tactics
 - Accurate driven crosses
 - First touch finishing
 - Makes good choices about passing, shooting or dribbling
 - Knows several ways to work with a teammate to beat an opponent (wall pass, 1-2, overlap, takeover) and move the ball forward
 - Know when and how to deliver a ball to a teammate to maximize their chances of making something positive happen
 - Playing the ball with intent. (No aimless kicking.)
 - Deciding when to attack directly versus when to attack through build-up.
 - When to switch fields and when to take advantage of numbers up situations
- Application of defensive tactics
 - Understanding of the roles of pressure, cover and balance – thorough knowledge of 3rd and 4th defenders
 - Able to initiate and support counter attacks from back
 - Staying between an attacker and our goal when we do not have possession – even if that attacker does not currently have the ball.
 - Compressing space when we lose possession
 - Ability to work as a line to deny space to the opponent (using offside rule to advantage)
- Combination play and communications with teammates
- Switches position with teammates as game play dictates in-order to maintain formation (defensive covering\recovering and offense diagonal runs, take-overs and overlaps)
- Combine endurance and speed during game.
- Understands the roles of players in the three “blocks” of the field”: defenders (backs), midfielders, forwards
- Increasingly able to move quickly and appropriately without the ball. Movement without the ball to support a player or create space.
- Active communication with teammates

Typical Characteristics of U14 Players ⁵

- Concerned about their body and how it appears to others.
- Increasingly appreciate effort as a factor in evaluating their performance (better able to distinguish between performance and outcome).
- Likely to use internal standards in evaluating themselves.
- Less willing to accept criticism.
- Seeking autonomy (may be critical of authority).
- Finding their identity (may experiment with other roles, activities, and interests).
- Able to think in abstract and hypothetical terms (better able to grasp strategic and tactical aspects of the game).
- Girls generally nearing the end of the growth spurt and sexual maturation. Rates of maturation may vary.
- Boys generally at the beginning or in the middle of the growth spurt and sexual maturation. Rates of maturation may vary.

Practice Suggestions:

Remember, the game is the best teacher. Every practice should end with some type of small sided game. This allows for the most contact with the ball in a game-like environment.

Emphasis on using techniques to solve tactical problems but do not focus on tactics at the expense of technique. Spending all of our time teaching tactics will not only detract from skill/motor-control development, but it will not guarantee tactical knowledge, as players will only be able to retain and apply a limited amount of knowledge at one time.

Warm-up and stretching is important. Open with a light motion activity with multiple balls in play that you can add players to as they arrive. Warm-ups should incorporate a technical and/or tactical element as a lead in the training session. Once muscles are warm, it is a good idea to complete some dynamic stretching (high kicks, gates, lunges, etc.) Finish warm-up with static stretching if desired.

Female athletes are particularly susceptible to ACL injuries with data suggesting they are 2-10 times more likely to sustain ligament damage.⁶ Please consider adding some knee strengthening activities to your warm-up. Reference:

The Santa Monica Sports Medicine Research Foundation The PEP Program: Prevent injury and Enhance Performance

<http://smsmf.org/smsf-programs/pep-program>

⁵ MA Youth Soccer E Manual

⁶ - Why women have an increased risk of ACL injury, Timothy E. Hewett, PhD, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, 2010 <http://www.aaos.org/news/aaosnow/nov10/research3.asp>
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Week 1: Passing for Possession
Week 2: Creating and Controlling Space
Week 3: Passing for Penetration and Movement (Overlaps \ Diagonal Runs)
Week 4: Shooting
Week 5: Finishing
Week 6: Defending 1 v 1
Week 7: Defending (Roles of Defenders – 1st, 2nd)
Week 8: Structure, Compactness and Zonal Defending
Week 9: Defending (Roles of Defenders – 1st, 2nd, 3rd) and Shape

Please Don't Include⁷:

- long lectures
- running for its own sake
- specialization by position – especially keepers
- emphasis on winning – remember their definition of fun is different from yours

Special Topics (mix in as needed):

Throw-ins
Free kicks
Corner kicks
Heading
Volley
Penalty Kicks

Reference:

Mass Youth Soccer U14-U18 Practice Plans

- Note these plans are tactic specific and can be used as needed to develop aspects of the game.

http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaching/practice_plans_u14-18.aspx

⁷ - Soccer Calling, A handbook for Youth Soccer Coaches, Dean Conway, 2005