



The Grassroots football session Age-Under (6-12)-II

Introduction

FIFA coordinate the development in all youth age-groups, although it is clear that the maturity process does not run parallel on all continents. A strict division into age groups cannot be applied the world over. All the same, a sub-division must be found. Hence, one can essentially speak of three main groups: of children (under-10), adolescents (under-14) and of youths (under-18). This is covered by FIFA training programme. All the same, we must distinguish among certain intermediate stages, thereby arriving at a fine structurization already starting with an under-6 stage.

Planning a training session

The development of a football player and the preparation of a team are comparable to building a house. In order to achieve the objectives that have been set, the coaching staff have to follow a series of steps that have been scheduled as part of an overall plan. This is known in the sporting world as the training plan. The training plan consists of determining objectives and implementing a set of increasingly detailed procedures with the aim of achieving these objectives. As with any form of education or teaching, as little as possible should be left to chance with training, even though a fair share of intuition, or “nous” on the part of the coach, also has its role to play in the process. The planning of his team’s training is therefore an essential task for any coach if he is to ensure that the players progress, that their performance abilities develop, and that they are prepared both individually and as a team for competitive action. This is just as much a task for top-level coaches as it is for youth coaches.

Before planning a training session, certain essentials must be kept in mind.

1. Training objectives
 2. The players
 3. Training methodology
 4. Phase and time
 5. Venue
 6. Review
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1. Training objectives: Planning is a very important process in which detailed attention must be paid. First step is to decide on the main objective of the session which aspect of individual/team ability to be focused upon. Example, individual skill can be shooting, passing and dribbling etc. A plan is prepared each individual training session should be planned to fulfill the objective.
 2. The player: A coach should have a deep understanding of his/her players and be aware of age, gender, personality type competitive ability, fitness level, languages etc. to help them realize their true potential.

3. Training methodology: The coach should be well aware of training objective and topics to be taught. The training methodology depends on the level of the players that he/she is teaching namely.
4. Phase and time (For 12 years and older)
 - a. Phase: Early or late pre-season in season, mid-season break post. This will determine the objective of the session i.e. fitness, technical, tactical, recovery, mental etc.
 - b. Time: Morning, evening or night session with regards to climatic conditions, kickoff time, availability of player's.
- 5. Venue:**
 - a. Outdoor: Availability, size and condition of pitch with regards to type of training
 - b. Indoor: *Fulsade* indoor stadium classroom theory/ meeting session
 - c. Grassroot: Fun, games, games, techniques and co-ordination etc.
 - d. Juniors: Skills, positional play, individual/group tactics conditioner, mental skills, nutrition, fair play etc.
 - e. Seniors: Team tactics, wining strategies, mental toughness peak performance, diet and nutrition, gamesmanship.
- 6. Review:** Review is very important part of planning and training. A few methods include getting feedback from fellow coaches and watching players own recorded training session. A coach should use his/her discretion and incorporate the changes suggested by fellow coaches.

Football and health: protection and security

The '11 for Health' programme improves children's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour towards diseases through football. Eleven simple messages on prevention, all based on scientific facts and linked to a specific football action, are learned in group plays. The programme has been launched in several African countries and research has shown that it improves children's health knowledge.

1. It is always important to provide children with a safe environment
 - The coach-educator can focus on the game with neither apprehension nor fear
 - The child can evolve and have fun without any risk.
 - Teachers and parents bring their children to the coach-educator in total trust.
2. Safety and security conditions at several levels
 - The child's insurance
 - The medical check-up
 - The football session
 - The football session environment
 - Festivals, tournaments and competitions
 - Prevention
3. Insurance

It is mandatory to take out accident insurance. Depending on the country and the specific programme, the insurance cover may have different aspects:

 - Schools: the children are insured to practice the sport
 - The club: registered with a national federation, the club must be insured for all events it organizes.
 - Children's licenses: all children playing football within a club must have a license.

- The event: the organized festival or tournament is covered.

4. Medical check-up

Ideally, all licenses from a club and all those who practice the sport in school must have undergone a medical check-up to ensure that they are fit to play the game and train with risks to their health.

5. The football session environment

Infrastructures must be maintained in good condition so nobody is in danger during the session – Goal posts fixed to the ground, movable goal posts 2 meters away from the game lines, pitch area and surroundings free from holes and obstacles, no broken glass, etc.

Equipment: Equipment must be in good condition and harmless to the children - football, goalposts (height and edges) etc.

First-aid kit: A first-aid kit must always be within reach in order to treat minor injuries.

First aid: In the absence of a qualified person to provide first aid, trainers must be able to fill in the gap.

Emergencies: Emergencies telephone numbers (ambulance/doctor on duty / hospital) must be within rapid reach using a telephone nearby whenever possible.

6. Festivals, tournaments and competitions

Fair play: Fair play is part of the behaviour to be promoted at every football event – Respect for the opponent, respect for the rules of the game, respect for the referee, no cheating, etc.

- Handshakes before and after the game, between players, referees and trainers.

Attitude of trainers, parents and supporters:

- All of these people should have an exemplary attitude in keeping with the spirit of football
- Children's education is often linked to parents' education

Technique: Development of feeling for the ball

In this training session we are discussing the age group of under 8 children. So as to develop of feeling for the ball that is also in line with the young player's technical ability, the ball may, at this early stage, be handled and also bounce. Help with hands is excluded only at a later stage, when the transition is made to juggling with the ball without touching the ground.

At the advance stage of this age group, the player should be picking the ball up with his foot and without the help of hands. He should be juggling the ball from left to right, drawing the tip of his boots upwards. The following exercise should be practiced, lifting the ball without the use of the hands:

Exercise -1:

1. Drop the ball out of the hands and kick upwards.
2. Catch the ball on the foot while moving forward.
3. Kick the ball higher than the head and catch it again with the foot.

Exercise -2:

Drag back the ball high using the instep

Exercise -3:

1. Possession of the ball. Drag the ball up high.
2. Keeping the ball high in the group.

Technique: Ball control

Exercises in this age group are limited to learning to control the ball. Leaving competitiveness aside, linear advancing with the ball using the instep is exercised or in circles using the inside and outside of the foot.

1. Dribbling around a cone. It is left to the player whether he uses the inside or outside of the foot.
2. i. Changing direction in the circle.
Pulling the ball back with the sole of the foot.
ii. Turning in the opposite direction.
The same without stopping the ball.
3. Linear advancing with the ball using the instep. Possibly "Locomotive" exercise, i.e. feigning a pass but continuing a forward dribble.
4. Alternate dribbling with the outside and inside of the foot.
5. Continuous exercising in a Zigzag using the inside and outside of the foot. This exercise can also be practiced as a relay race.
6. Combination of ball control in a circle and in a line. The ball is dribbled in one direction in zigzag using the inside and outside of the foot and in the other direction straight ahead using the instep.

Technique: Playing/Receiving the ball/ in direction of goal

Stating from both stationary play and moving about the ball, the introduction of tactics keeps the goal as the target and play must move in this direction. The methods behind this are:

Playing with and without stopping, at first with the inside of the foot. Apart from accuracy, attention should be given to passing into the path of the teammates or in the direction of the open space near to him.

Exercise: 1.

Passing to and from a partner in the direction of the goal.

Exercise: 2.

Passing to and from a partner but around and about a thicket of flags. To improve skill, this exercise is carried out at first by stopping the ball and later by returning it directly.

Exercise: 3.

This exercise progresses to a team effort aimed at a goal with a goalkeeper.

Tactics: Miniature football games

This is the stage where miniature foot-ball games are introduced, according to the number of players available. There are a variety of possibilities:

- Three against three (3 v 3)
- Four against four (4 v 4)
- Five against five (5 v 5)

The team organization depends on the variation chosen:

1. With one or two leaders. The leaders are coaches or older players, who guide the youngsters to a limited extent during play. Both team, one captain is necessary to organize the tournament.
2. The leader and the youngsters play directly to one another.
3. Each team is allowed two stops during play.
4. Each team is allowed one stop.
5. Without any breaks.

Physical condition: training

The development of co-ordination and speed in the game of football is the primary object of physical preparations in this age group. This can be achieved systematically, starting with individual exercises and moving on to activity with a partner, with the group and then the team. In this age group motor quality is also necessary e.g. agility, strength, flexibility, speed etc.

1. Running around a partner: Groups of two are formed on the field with adequate space between each person. One player stands still while the other runs around him in as many ways and variations as possible.
2. Make in pairs: Three groups of equal size are formed. Group 1, identified by a handkerchief or a headband, does the catching. Whoever is caught by a member of group 1 has to crouch down, but may be freed by any of the members of group 2 or 3 who are running about.
3. Simple relay run: a team activity with the variations; forwards – backwards – side ways
4. Relay run carrying an object
5. Relay run carrying an object: Requiring a zigzag run around extra relay posts.

Conclusion

The FIFA Grassroots programme is aimed at giving children aged between 6 and 12 the opportunity to play football, regardless of their social background. The children's football coach has a dynamic role to play. The coach uses a host of fun activities to introduce the children to the game and is mindful to motivate not only their sporting but also their social development.