



WENTWORTH FALLS FC

COACHES HANDBOOK



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Coaches Role & Responsibilities

Coaches Role

- **Enjoy** your time coaching and remember you can always ask for help or support from the club CCC (Club Coaching Coordinator), other coaches in or out of our club, club coaching officials etc. If you are new, you are about to begin a journey into the coaching community and we all try and support each other here no matter if you are the best coach or the challenged coach!
- **Read** this handbook and always feel free to contact your CCC (Club Coaching Coordinator) with any questions at mpo@wentworthfallsfc.com.au
This handbook has been produced in line with and using information from the FFA National Curriculum and is edited regularly by the CCC.
- **Be** aware of your role as coach under the NFA Competition Regulations which I will email to you
- **Be** aware of and adhering to the Coach Code of Conduct which I will email to you
- **Be** aware of and communicating the Player & Spectator Code of Conduct to parents which I will email to you
- Making yourself available for coaches and managers meetings.
- Be familiar with the 17 Laws of the game – this is free and can be completed online - <https://www.playfootball.com.au/referee/laws-of-the-game>
- Maintaining the club Kit Bag, club shirts & club training equipment
- Providing valid Working With Children Check number and email to mpo@wentworthfallsfc.com.au
- Completing coach accreditation where required in your development phase –
 - U5-U10 MINIROOS COURSE – Free at PITT PARK before season begins
 - U11-U12 SKILLS TRAINING COURSE (Only Div 1 Teams) – Club funded course
 - U13-U16 GAME TRAINING (Only Div 1 Teams) – Club funded course



Our Football Philosophy

Wentworth Falls football club has adopted a playing style that is aligned with the FFA National Curriculum and can be simply defined as:-

A pro-active brand of football, based on effective possession, with the cutting edge provided by creative individuals.

Defensively the key components are quick transition and intelligent collective pressing.

The Playing Style is underpinned by a strong 'team mentality', capitalizing on Australia's traditional strengths.

This means we must focus on developing teams and players that are able to execute this playing style and we therefore must understand the main pre requisites.

Pro-active Football	Pre-requisites
Dominate and control the play through effective possession	Quality positioning play
Get the ball and our players into goal scoring positions in a structured manner	High technical level (all players must be comfortable on the ball)
Break down compact defences through individual skill and combination play	Special players
Strive to possess the ball (the more we have the ball, the less we have to defend)	Willingness and ability of all players to immediately transition from BP>BPO and BPO>BP for 90 minutes (high intensity football)
Win the ball back through quick transition and intelligent collective pressing	High level of football-specific fitness (the essence of the Football Conditioning methodology)

Effective possession

Effective possession does not mean playing like FC Barcelona and trying to control the game by dominating the ball. Effective possession should be a means of getting the ball and our players into goal scoring positions in a controlled manner. Effective possession should also lead to a higher number of successful entries into the attacking third, more shots on goal and more shots on target.

To be able to do that **all players**, including the GK, must be technically proficient and **all players** must understand and execute quality positioning play.

Formation 1-4-3-3

1-4-3-3 has been mandated for all development teams within the official State and National Talented Player Pathways.

As our playing style is incorporating a collective press of the opponent's back four, it is easier with 3 attackers spread across the width of the pitch rather than with two. It's also a very flexible formation that meets our desired playing style while being an easier formation to teach youth players as a platform to other formations later on.

Rationale

In the 1-4-3-3 formation there are 3 lines with a balanced spread of players over the pitch ('triangles' of players) which creates good conditions for:

- Effective positioning play
- Playing out from the back
- Combination football / short passing game
- Creative and varied attacking play using the width of the field
- Early disturbing and pressuring after losing possession

For **Game Training** and **Performance Phases**, the positions and the attached basic tasks are logical and recognizable, which makes learning to play as a team easier to develop.

For the **Discovery Phase** and **Skill Acquisition Phases** formats 7 v 7 (1-3-3) and 9 v 9 (1-3-2-3) lead up to the 1-4-3-3 formation in a logical and methodical manner.

Basic Forms

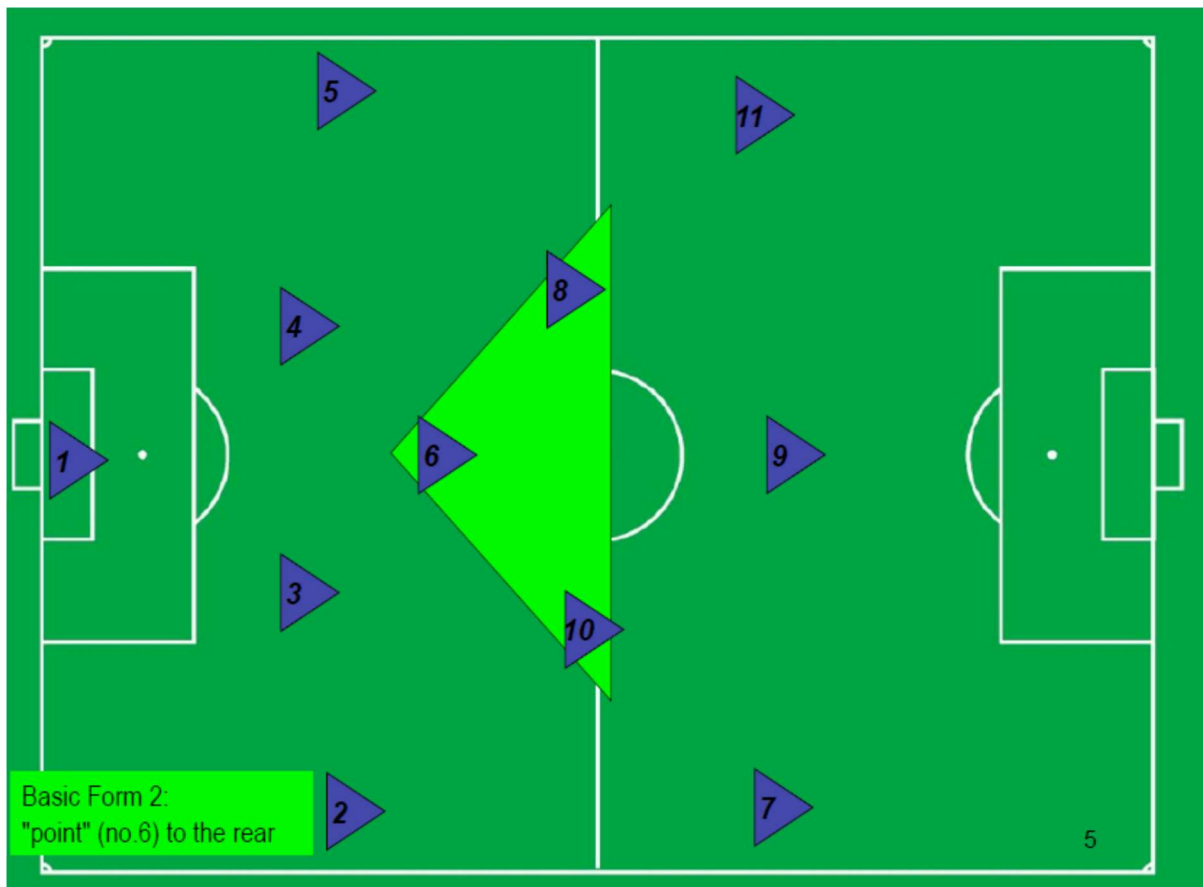
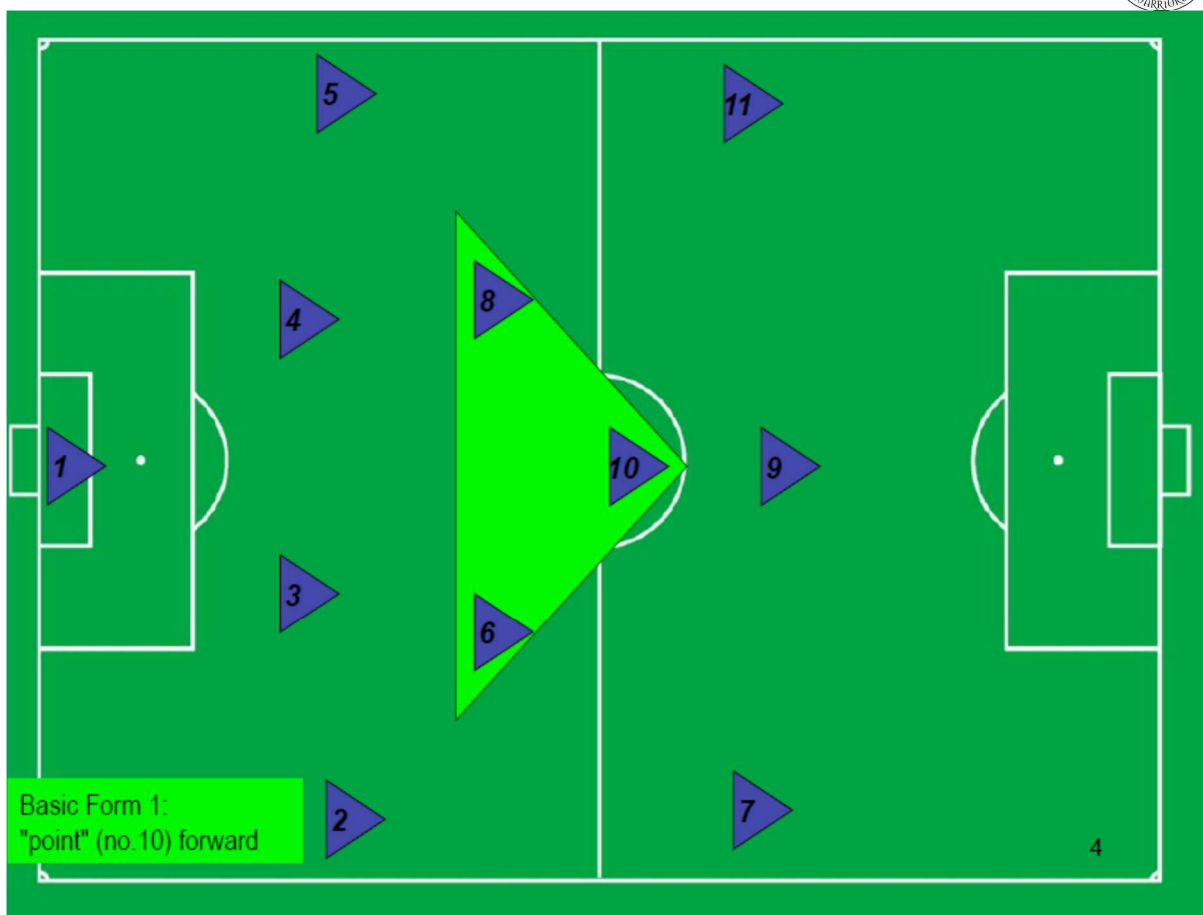
The 1-4-3-3 formation has 2 basic forms, with a number of derived (offensive or defensive) variations:

1. The midfield triangle with the 'point' (no.10) forward.
2. The midfield triangle with the 'point' (no.6) to the rear.

FFA advises that players in the age categories U/12 to U/15 should learn to master basic form 1.

U/16 to U/19 should also learn to master basic form 2

The following three pages will run through the 2 basic forms in both defence and offense. The material used for these diagrams were borrowed from the FFA 1-4-3-3 Rationale which is a very informative tool on tactics in this formation. You will find this in your coaching kit for further reference as this coaching handbook is only concerned with introducing the playing style and formation. We encourage all our coaches to upskill themselves and also share resources and learnings with all other WFFC coaches.



Defensive principles per line

Midfield (6 – 8 – 10) pointed forward:

No's 6 & 8

- ⚽ Cover the central and lateral defensive midfield area's
- ⚽ Screen / shield the lines to the strikers
- ⚽ Take over positions, 'fill' gaps and stay 'behind the ball' (at least one of both)
- ⚽ Ball 'winners' with strong tactical awareness / insight
Grella, Culina, Carrick, Essien

No. 10

- ⚽ Connects with no.6 & no.8 to form a 'block' in the midfield
- ⚽ Covers the central offensive midfield area
- ⚽ Supports no.9 in pressuring the opponents central defenders
Bresciano, Cahill, Kaka



Defensive principles per line

Midfield pointed to the rear:

No. 6

- ⚽ Covers the central defensive midfield area
- ⚽ Screens / shields the line to the strikers
- ⚽ Takes over positions, 'fill' gaps and always stays 'behind the ball'
- ⚽ Ball 'winner' with strong tactical awareness / insight, on field leadership
Toure, Mascherano

No's 8 & 10

- ⚽ Connect with no.6 to form a 'block' in the midfield
- ⚽ Cover the lateral midfield area's
- ⚽ Technical and tactical 'all round' midfielders that are able to cover large spaces
Gerrard, Lampard, Ballack, Xavi, Iniesta



Offensive principles per line

Midfield pointed forward:

No's. 6 & 8:

- 'transfer' playing out to attacking
- feed and support the attacking 'unit'
- good game (passing) skills, vision and handling speed are required (*Grella, Culina*).

No.10 (key player in this formation):

- attacking midfielder (not a traditional 'playmaker')
 - good 'interaction' with the strikers (especially with no. 9)
 - penetrate in front line and look for scoring chances
 - good anticipation/feeling for right moment
 - good tactical insight, technique and handling speed (*Kaka, Cahill, Bergkamp*)
 - In this formation no's. 7 & 11 are more traditional 'wingers' making attacking moves in the wide positions and providing assists and crosses. They can come inside but needs to be well timed, not 'closing' the spaces for no.10.
- (*Robben, Giggs, Beckham*)



Offensive principles per line

Midfield pointed to the rear:

- No. 6 is the 'controlling' midfielder. He/she always has to stay 'behind the ball' and take over the positions of the players that go forward. No.6 also holds a key role in playing out and is a player with strong game (passing) skills and vision. (*Essien, Mascherano, Toure, Carrick*)
- No's 8 & 10 'feed' and support the strikers. They have strong individual skills, vision and handling speed. They provide the assists for the strikers and have goalscoring abilities. These are the 'complete' midfielders. (*Lampard, Gerrard, Xavi, Iniesta*)
- In this formation no's. 7 & 11 are 'multi functional' attackers making attacking moves to the inside (and outside) starting from wide positions. The 3 attackers often switch positions but the formation should always be maintained. (*Cristiano Ronaldo, Messi, Rooney, Henry*)



Team Model

Now that we understand the way we want to play we need to have a way of communicating this in a logical sense. The team model is a very powerful tool as you will come to understand through the course of this handbook. It lays the foundations to be able to:

- Articulate the playing style
- Guide the training and coaching program
- Provide a big picture of 'why you are doing what you are doing' at each phase

And if you develop further from here the most powerful applications are to:

- Analyse your team for football problems (i.e. 6,7,10 unable to combine in the middle third)
- Create training session plans to correct this far more effectively.

WHY USE SOMEONE ELSE'S TRAINING SESSIONS THAT ARE NOT FIXING YOUR TEAMS SPECIFIC FOOTBALL PROBLEMS?

Main Moments

The four **MAIN MOMENTS** below make up the structure of football, every action by the team and players both occur during one of these four **MAIN MOMENTS**.

MAIN MOMENTS	BPO>BP	BP	BP>BPO	BPO
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BP = Ball Possession (We have the ball)

BPO = Ball Possession Opponent (They have the ball)

Then there are the 2 transition moments

BPO>BP = Transition from not having the ball to having the ball

BP>BPO = Transition from having the ball to not having the ball



Key Principles

Now the stated playing style, within the chosen formation, can be expressed in a series of **KEY PRINCIPLES**

MAIN MOMENTS	BPO>BP	BP	BP>BPO	BPO
KEY PRINCIPLES	Immediate transition into BP positions	Effective Possession 1.Structured Build-Up	Immediate transition into BPO positions	Win the ball back as soon as possible
	Quick forward passing	Effective Possession 2.Controlled Possession in the Middle Third	Press the ball carrier immediately	Deny opponents time and space to build-up
	Quick forward movement	Combination Play 1.Organised opponent	Limit Opponents passing options	Limit opponents ability to create scoring chances
	Make the field as big as possible	Combination play 2.Disorganised opponent	Make the field as small as possible	
		Individual Skill 1.To create scoring chances		
		Individual Skill 2. To convert scoring chances		

So we have now articulated seventeen Key Principles which should begin to paint pictures in one's mind of what we expect to see happening on the field.

'Effective possession'? You can see possession in the Key Principles, but there is a strong impression that we mean 'possession for purpose': keeping the ball to establish a structured method of getting the ball into the opponent's goal.

Because of the logical, football- language approach in the Key Principles, it leads to this conclusion:

- If that's the kind of football you believe in
- If that's what you expect to see when the team plays
- THEN NATURALLY THESE ARE THE THINGS YOU SHOYULD CONSTANTLY BE DEVELOPING IN TRAINING

The team model now requires further elaboration and detail. Logically, each of the Key Principles needs to be clarified in order to guide training and coaching. In other words, it probably won't be effective to simply tell the players the Key Principles: 'OK, girls, I want a structured build-up. Off you go.'



Team Tasks, Player Tasks, Player Actions

Using our first principle in BP, 'Structured Build-up', we have listed below 1 **TEAM TASKS** to assist in its achievement along with the required **PLAYER TASKS** that need to be executed:

Key Principle	Team Tasks	Player Tasks
Effective Possession 1. Structured Build-Up	1. Get a back four player into the middle third in controlled possession	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Goalkeeper, act as an extra field player by supporting the ball2. 3 and 4, split to make it hard for one opponent to mark both of you3. 2 and 5, push high and wide so you're not in line with 3 and 44. 6 and 8, start high to create more space for back four5. Pass the ball with good ball speed to move opponents out of position6. Give information to team-mates based on your observation of opponents and team-mates positioning

Now add to this the **PLAYER ACTIONS** that are required as the player moves around the field and interacts with the ball and his team mates. These can be simplified like this:

PLAYER ACTIONS	
Ball Possession	Positioning, First Touch, Running with the Ball, 1v1, Striking the Ball, Communicating
Ball Possession Opponent	Positioning, Pressing, Marking, Intercepting, Tackling, Communicating

It's important to note that the focus of player actions are different during the different phases of development, we will touch on this in the next section in more detail.



So the full team model looks like this:

OUTCOME	WIN MATCHES			
OBJECTIVES	SCORE GOALS		PREVENT GOALS	
METHODS	GET THE BALL AND YOUR PLAYERS INTO GOALSCORING POSITIONS		PREVENT THE OPPONENT GETTING THE BALL AND THEIR PLAYERS INTO GOALSCORING POSITIONS	
MAIN MOMENTS	BPO>BP	BP	BP>BPO	BPO
KEY PRINCIPLES	Immediate transition into BP positions	Effective Possession 1.Structured Build-Up	Immediate transition into BPO positions	Win the ball back as soon as possible
	Quick forward passing	Effective Possession 2.Controlled Possession in the Middle Third	Press the ball carrier immediately	Deny opponents time and space to build-up
	Quick forward movement	Combination Play 1.Organised opponent	Limit Opponents passing options	Limit opponents ability to create scoring chances
	Make the field as big as possible	Combination play 2.Disorganised opponent	Make the field as small as possible	
		Individual Skill 1.To create scoring chances		
		Individual Skill 2. To convert scoring chances		
TEAM TASKS	(Fundamental Task to make the Key Principles Happen)			
PLAYER TASKS	(General and Position-specific)			
PLAYER ACTIONS	Positioning, First Touch, Running with the Ball, 1v1, Striking the ball, Communicating		Positioning, Pressing, Marking, Intercepting, Tackling, Communicating	

This is, obviously, a one-page overview of the full model. The coach must expand the detail for each Main Moment and associated Key Principles, outlining Team Tasks and Player Tasks in depth.

Age-appropriate stages in developing football players

We have identified HOW WE WANT TO PLAY FOOTBALL

Now let us look at HOW WE SHOULD COACH FOOTBALL

The Building Blocks



The building blocks clarify:

- What coaching football should be about at each of the four development stages.
- What parts of the **Team Model** should be taught at each stage

AGE: 5-9 DISCOVERY PHASE	
Role of the Coach	'To facilitate the players' discovery of the objectives of football and the basic player actions required by providing a fun football environment'
AGE: 9-13 SKILL ACQUISITION PHASE	
Role of the Coach	'To prepare players for team football by developing the functional game skills'
AGE: 13-17 GAME TRAINING PHASE	
Role of the Coach	'To prepare skilful players for performance phase football by teaching them to apply the functional game skills in a team setting'
AGE: 17+ PERFORMANCE PHASE	
Role of the Coach	'To prepare successful teams'



Discovery Phase

AGE: 5-9 DISCOVERY PHASE	
Role of the Coach	'To facilitate the players' discovery of the objectives of football and the basic player actions required by providing a fun football environment'
What parts of the model?	SEE BELOW

OUTCOME	WIN MATCHES			
OBJECTIVES	SCORE GOALS		PREVENT GOALS	
METHODS				
MAIN MOMENTS				
KEY PRINCIPLES				
TEAM TASKS				
PLAYER TASKS				
PLAYER ACTIONS	Positioning, First Touch, Running with the Ball, 1v1, Striking the ball, Communicating			

A training session for children in this age consists of 3 components: The Beginning, The Middle and The End.

1. The Beginning

The purpose of The Beginning (better known as the warm-up) is to get the kids in the right frame of mind and activate their bodies. It's unnecessary to run laps around the field and do stretches to achieve that: all sorts of relays and tagging games with and without the ball are much better (more specific, more fun) and also help develop the children's basic coordination.

2. The Middle

The Middle is the section of the training session where we conduct fun football exercises such as dribbling, passing, shooting, etc.

3. The End

The last part (The End) is allocated for playing all sorts of Small-Sided Games

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN IN THIS AGE BRACKET?

- They are still 'clumsy' (lack fine motor skills), because they are still developing their coordination
- They have a short span of attention and are quickly and easily distracted
- They are 'self-centred' and not yet able to really work together (so do not ask them to perform team play, it is impossible for them!)
- They play or participate for fun with short bursts of energy and enthusiasm
- They are unable to handle a lot of information (instructions; feedback)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TRAINING SESSIONS WITH CHILDREN THIS AGE?

Just let them play a lot of varied fun football related games!

In the 'good old days' as a kid you learned to play football in the street or the park. There were no coaches involved who made you run laps or do stretches and push-ups. When you were with just one mate you played a 1 v 1 game, when there were 8 of you, you played 4 v 4. There were no referees either, you made your own rules and every problem got solved. You just played, every free minute of the day. Funny as it may seem, this was (and still is) the best possible way to develop a basic skill level, understanding and passion for football.

In third World countries the old saying "the game is the teacher" still applies and is one of the reasons why we find so many creative and technically good players from Africa and South America in the European top leagues. But in our developed society children do not play sports in the streets and parks that much anymore. They watch television, surf the internet, play computer games, chat on Twitter and Facebook as well as having to study.

As parents we now send our children to a club or academy to learn to play football and, despite all good intentions, here we make the mistake of 'coaching' children this age.

The first and most important step when 'coaching' the youngest kids is to take the word 'coach' out of your mind. Your most important job is to recreate that street football environment, be an organiser of fun football-related practices and.....let them play! This approach, where they can 'discover' how the game works in a natural way, is the right one for the Discovery Phase.

Skill Acquisition Phase

AGE: 9-13 SKILL ACQUISITION PHASE	
Role of the Coach	'To prepare players for team football by developing the functional game skills'
What parts of the model?	SEE BELOW

OUTCOME	WIN MATCHES			
OBJECTIVES	SCORE GOALS		PREVENT GOALS	
METHODS	GET THE BALL AND YOUR PLAYERS INTO GOALSCORING POSITIONS		PREVENT THE OPPONENT GETTING THE BALL AND THEIR PLAYERS INTO GOALSCORING POSITIONS	
MAIN MOMENTS	BPO>BP	BP	BP>BPO	BPO
KEY PRINCIPLES		Effective Possession, Combination Play, Individual Skill		Win the ball back ASAP, deny time and space, limit scoring chances
TEAM TASKS		BASIC TEAM TASKS		
PLAYER TASKS		General Only		
PLAYER ACTIONS	Positioning, First Touch, Running with the Ball, 1v1, Striking the ball, Communicating		Positioning, Pressing, Marking, Intercepting, Tackling, Communicating	

Those parts of the model that contain great text and shading are the elements that are introduced by **HIDDEN LEARNING**. These aspects of the game are not necessarily stressed and coached, but automatically built-in, especially in 1v1 and small sided game context.

At this age the children are ready for a more structured approach to training. In every session the focus is on one of the core skills, from the beginning until the end of the session ("theme based sessions").

The Skill Acquisition Phase sessions consist of 3 components:

1. **Skill introduction**, this is the warm-up as well as an introduction to the designated core skill for this session. This is the only part of the session where drill-type exercises should be used, but the creative coach can include elements of decision-making.
- Flow, no 'stop-start coaching'.
2. **Skill training**, this is the part of the session where conscious teaching and learning of the designated core skill takes place.



- Lots of repetition in game realistic scenarios!
- Task-based coaching
- Effective feedback
- Use of questioning (ask players 'why did you choose that option?', 'where do you think there might be more space?', etc)

3. **Skill game**, a game where as much as possible all the elements of the real game are present but organised in a way that the designated core skill has to be used regularly.
 - Skill games are preferably small sided games to stimulate the number of repetitions/touches!
 - The players play, the coach observes if learning has taken place.

It is also advisable to 'wrap-up' the session at the end, summarising the main points of the session to enhance learning.

ABOUT THE SKILL ACQUISITION PHASE

The emphasis in the Skill Acquisition Phase is on Skill Development but this can/should not be separated from developing insight/game understanding at the same time.

If this approach is applied properly, it will provide a seamless transition into the Game Training Phase.

During the Skill Acquisition Phase, 2-3 sessions of 60-75 minutes plus a game is a safe weekly workload, with the following session planning guidelines:

1. Welcome: 5 minutes
2. Skill Introduction: 15-20 minutes
3. Skill Training: 25-30 minutes
4. Skill Game: 20-25 minutes
5. Wrap up: 5 minutes

With 3 sessions per week our advice is to limit the duration of the sessions to 60 minutes and rest the players the day before as well as the day after the game. So, with a game on Saturday, we recommend a training session on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.

Factors to consider:

Performance of the players in previous training sessions

Performance of the players in matches (NB: matches should only be assessed in terms of core skill performance, not 'team tactics'. That way, training and matches are closely and logically linked)

Observation may lead you to conclude that one core skill appears to be especially deficient in most of the players, while another is generally strong.

Possible Cycle Planning changes:

Replace the stronger skill with the weaker one every second rotation Move to a 5-session rotation in which each skill is focused on once, except for the weaker one which appears twice



The best advice for a coach working with players in this age group would be to attend the Skills Training Course run each year.

This will give coaches a much better understanding of the why's and how's of session planning and season planning, while developing their ability to design their own practices.

THE FOUR CORE SKILLS

The FFA Skill Acquisition training program focuses upon developing four core skills when in possession of the ball:

- 1. Striking the ball**
This includes all forms of striking the ball such as short/long passing, shooting and crossing
- 2. First Touch**
Controlling the ball with all allowed body parts
- 3. 1v1**
All moves, feints and accelerations to get past and away from an opponent
- 4. Running with the ball**
At speed (with a lot of space) or 'dribbling' (in tight areas), this includes techniques for protecting the ball and changing direction

These four core skills cover 95% of the actions of any outfield player when in possession of the ball during a game of football. The other 5% consists of actions such as heading and throw-ins.

Of course we can also distinguish defensive skills such as various tackling techniques and it goes without saying that the defensive 1 v 1 skills are equally important and must be properly developed too.

We made the practical choice to develop the defensive skills as part of the 1 v 1 practices. Although the emphasis is on the attacking skills, we are not ignoring the defensive ones. So, in the 1 v 1 Model Sessions, coaches will find the box below with coaching tips for the defender as well the attacker.

1 V 1 COACHING TIPS

ATTACKER	DEFENDER
"Go at the defender with speed"	"Show the attacker one way/force them away from goal"
"Use a feint to put the defender off balance"	"Bend your knees and stand on your toes so you're able to change direction quickly"
"Threaten to go to one side then suddenly attack the other"	"The best moment to commit is when the attacker takes a heavy touch or slows down"



As we've explained earlier it takes many hours of practicing and lots of repetition to properly develop the four core skills with both feet and 'automate' the techniques. Automate means that we've practised the techniques so often that we can execute them without having to consciously concentrate on the execution.

We can compare this process with learning to drive a car: in the beginning we have to consciously think of every act in the process, we even tend to look where the pedals are. But after some time we drive from A to B while having a conversation, thinking deeply about something or making a (hands free) phone call. We arrive at our destination totally unaware of the driving acts we have executed on the way: driving a car has become an automatism.

The same principle applies for mastering the core skills: many hours of purposeful practice will eventually lead to automatism and we execute the skill 'unconsciously'. When this happens we will, as a consequence, have more time for scanning our options and making decisions. With top level players the ball is 'glued' to their feet while they look around and check the options

Scientific research (Daniel Coyle, 'The Talent Code'; et al.) shows that in football the most educationally effective way is to develop technical skills (execution) and perception skills (decision-making) simultaneously.

Important:

When the kids start playing 11 v 11 while they are still in the Skill Acquisition Phase, (U12/13) there is a common tendency for coaches to become totally obsessed with results, and forget that the players are still in the skill acquisition phase. This has a very negative effect on training session content as well as Match Day behaviour.

Training must remain focused on skill development; it is poor practice and detrimental to the players to sacrifice critical skill training time in order to conduct unnecessary 'tactical' coaching.

Match Day is when the coach can start developing the players insight and understanding of the basic team and player tasks. This involves reinforcement and elaboration of the basic tasks introduced at training during Skill Games ('Get between the lines', 'Can you face forward?' 'Look for the killer pass', 'Make the field big', etc)

It is also disadvantageous for young players' development to specialize for a specific team position too early; let them experience the various positions and aim for specialisation during the Game Training phase (the rationale for this is excellently explained in the book 'Coaching Outside the Box' by Mairs and Shaw).

So, herein lies the huge challenge for anyone working with players in this important age bracket: your primary role is that of a 'skills teacher' focused on individual technical development as opposed to being a 'team coach'.

Your mission is to 'automate' the core skills through lots of repetition, but at the same time avoid 'drill' practices, where there may be repetition but no decision-making.

IT'S NOT EASY TO GET THIS RIGHT!



Game Training Phase

AGE: 13-17 GAME TRAINING PHASE	
Role of the Coach	'To prepare skilful players for performance phase football by teaching them to apply the functional game skills in a team setting'
What parts of the model?	SEE BELOW

OUTCOME	WIN MATCHES			
OBJECTIVES	SCORE GOALS		PREVENT GOALS	
METHODS	GET THE BALL AND YOUR PLAYERS INTO GOALSCORING POSITIONS		PREVENT THE OPPONENT GETTING THE BALL AND THEIR PLAYERS INTO GOALSCORING POSITIONS	
MAIN MOMENTS	BPO>BP	BP	BP>BPO	BPO
KEY PRINCIPLES	Immediate transition into BP positions	Effective Possession 1.Structured Build-Up	Immediate transition into BPO positions	Win the ball back as soon as possible
	Quick forward passing	Effective Possession 2.Controlled Possession in the Middle Third	Press the ball carrier immediately	Deny opponents time and space to build-up
	Quick forward movement	Combination Play 1.Organised opponent	Limit Opponents passing options	Limit opponents ability to create scoring chances
	Make the field as big as possible	Combination play 2.Disorganised opponent	Make the field as small as possible	
		Individual Skill 1.To create scoring chances		
		Individual Skill 2. To convert scoring chances		
TEAM TASKS	(Fundamental Task to make the Key Principles Happen)			
PLAYER TASKS	(General and Position-specific)			
PLAYER ACTIONS	Positioning, First Touch, Running with the Ball, 1v1, Striking the ball, Communicating		Positioning, Pressing, Marking, Intercepting, Tackling, Communicating	

The Game Training Phase has two main objectives:

- Preparing players for senior football by teaching them to apply functional game skills in a team setting using 1-4-3-3 as the preferred formation
- Developing tactical awareness, perception and decision-making through a game-related approach to training.

Since Game Training Phase sessions should strive for game realistic scenarios, the practices must include game specific resistances such as opponents, team-mates, direction, rules and appropriate dimensions. As a consequence, in Game Training Phase sessions often all three Main Moments take place continuously, but the focus is on one of them.

Game Training Phase sessions consist of 4 components: Warm up, Positioning Game, Game Training, Training Game.

WARM UP:

Starting points for the Warm Up are:

- Preferably with ball (e.g. passing practices);
- If possible 'theme related' including a level of decision-making;
Avoid warm-ups that are more like conditioning sessions!

POSITIONING GAMES:

The main conditions for quality positioning play are:

- Maximal use of space in order to create more time on the ball
(stretching the opponent)
- Triangles (no players in straight lines)
- Support play to create options for the player on the ball
- Anticipation and communication (verbal and non-verbal).

These basic principles form the foundation for proactive possession based football and this explains the importance of the positioning games in training practices.

Through positioning games young players:

- Learn to always create at least 3 options for the player on the ball (through proper positioning)
- Improve their decision-making (by learning to choose the right option)
- Increase their handling speed (less space and time forces quicker thinking and acting)
- Improve their technique (passing and first touch are essential technical skills)
- Learn to communicate both verbally (e.g. calling for the ball) and non-verbally (e.g. through ball speed and ball direction).

This is the reason why positioning games are on the menu of every Game Training Phase and Performance Phase session.



THE GAME TRAINING COMPONENT:

This is the part of the session where conscious teaching and learning of the designated Team Task takes place. For a proper Game Training practice the coach must therefore:

- Create the proper scenario (organize the practice in such a way that the focus is on the designated Team Task);
- Organize the practice in the right area of the field (where this particular situation takes place during the real game) and with the appropriate dimensions
- Create the proper level of resistance (too easy = no development; too difficult = no success)
- Make effective interventions and provide quality (specific) feedback
- Ask smart questions to develop player understanding and enhance learning

TRAINING GAME:

This is the traditional game at the end of a session. In our approach however it should not just be a 'free' game. The definition of a Training Game in the context of a Game Training Phase session is:

A game at the end of the session that contains all the elements of the real game but with rules and restraints that see to it that the designated Team Task is emphasised.

During a Training Game the players are playing and the coach is observing if learning has taken place (little or no stop-start coaching but preferably coaching 'on the run').

Clearly, quality coaching is not as easy as it may look!

The coach must also be mindful of the Growth Spurt. Players going through this stage of maturation will have varying energy levels and are injury-prone. Proper managing of training loads to avoid over-training is essential.

Therefore we consider 3 sessions of 75-90 minutes and one game a maximum safe weekly work load, with the following session planning guidelines:

1. Welcome/explanation: 5 minutes
2. Warm Up: 15-20 minutes
3. Positioning Games: 20 minutes
4. Game Training component: 25-30 minutes
5. Training Game: 20-25 minutes
6. Warm Down/wrap up 5-10 minutes

ABOUT THE GAME TRAINING PHASE

The most important aspect of this age bracket is the fact that these players are in (or entering into) the puberty phase which is a phase of radical mental and physical changes.

Huge changes in the hormonal system cause confusion while the physical changes can also unsettle the youngsters. Physically they may sometimes suddenly look like adults but mentally they often are still children, something that may also confuse coaches. Another aspect for coaches to consider is that in general, girls enter the puberty phase slightly earlier than boys.

The main mental characteristics of the puberty phase are:

- Sudden mood changes
- Resistance against authority
- Impulsiveness (first acting then thinking)
- Accelerated intellectual development
- Identity search which leads to a desire to be part of a group

The main physical characteristic of the puberty phase is a sudden acceleration in growth. One of the consequences of this growth spurt may be a temporary decrease of coordination and strength.

Because suddenly the bones start growing fast and the muscles and ligaments as well as the nervous system need time to adjust to the new proportions, players may look 'clumsy'. Players are also prone to overuse injuries like Osgood-Schlatter disease during this phase.

It goes without saying that it's of the ultimate importance that coaches working with players this age have knowledge and understanding of all these aspects to be able to guide youngsters through this critical development phase in a well-considered way.

While during the puberty phase players' physical and technical development temporarily stagnates or loses ground, their intellectual development accelerates as does their understanding of and appreciation for teamwork. This makes the Game Training Phase exceptionally suited for developing tactical awareness and insight.

Whereas the purpose of the Skill Acquisition Phase is to acquire the core skills, the Game Training Phase is about learning how to apply them in a functional way. In the Game Training Phase the focus shifts towards learning to play as a team and developing an understanding of the team tasks during the main moments (attacking; defending; transitioning), as well as the specific tasks that go with the individual team positions.

To be able to properly develop the team tasks and the individual player tasks we need the context of a playing formation. After all, team tasks and player tasks may differ depending on the playing formation.

THE 1-4-3-3 FORMATION

It is important to realise that we did not just take 1-4-3-3 as a starting point! Unfortunately this has been and continues to be widely misunderstood and far too much attention has been devoted to discussions about playing formations.

Of course there are many successful styles and formations in football but FFA considers 1-4-3-3 the most appropriate formation to develop an understanding of team play in young players.

Our opinion is supported by another very interesting quote from the Chris Sulley research on Europe's most successful academies:

"THERE WAS A CLEAR EMPHASIS ON A POSSESSION BASED PHILOSOPHY AND MOST EMPLOYED A 4-3-3 MODEL WITH AN EXPLICIT ATTEMPT TO PASS THE BALL THROUGH THE UNITS. THERE WAS A TANGIBLE DIFFERENCE IN THE TYPE OF WORK DELIVERED TO THE PLAYERS FROM WHAT IS TYPICALLY DELIVERED AT EPL ACADEMIES. EARLY AGE PLAYERS TYPICALLY PARTICIPATED IN RANDOM AND VARIABLE PRACTICES THAT INVOLVED DECISION-MAKING TACTICALLY. THE CONSISTENT TALENT ID CRITERIA WAS CENTRED AROUND THE PLAYER'S ABILITY TO HANDLE THE



BALL, MAKE GOOD DECISIONS AND SPEED, AS OPPOSED TO THE NOTIONS OF POWER, SIZE AND STRENGTH THAT STILL DOMINATE THE ENGLISH YOUTH SYSTEM”.

Similar to the sessions of the Skill Acquisition Phase, the sessions of the Game Training Phase are also ‘themes based’. During the Skill Acquisition Phase the ‘theme’ of a session focuses on one of the four ‘Core Skills’ (first touch; running with the ball; 1 v 1; striking the ball)

In the Game Training Phase the ‘theme’ of a session focuses on one of the ‘Main Moments’ and the Team Tasks (as well as the individual player tasks) within that ‘Main Moment’.

To arrange the Game Training Phase Model Sessions more practically, we have subdivided the Main Moments into ‘trainable’ themes. These can be viewed underneath the heading "The Main 'Trainable' Themes'



Performance Phase

AGE: 17+ PERFORMANCE PHASE	
Role of the Coach	'To prepare a successful team'
What parts of the model?	SEE BELOW

OUTCOME	WIN MATCHES			
OBJECTIVES	SCORE GOALS		PREVENT GOALS	
METHODS	GET THE BALL AND YOUR PLAYERS INTO GOALSCORING POSITIONS		PREVENT THE OPPONENT GETTING THE BALL AND THEIR PLAYERS INTO GOALSCORING POSITIONS	
MAIN MOMENTS	BPO>BP	BP	BP>BPO	BPO
KEY PRINCIPLES	Immediate transition into BP positions	Effective Possession 1.Structured Build-Up	Immediate transition into BPO positions	Win the ball back as soon as possible
	Quick forward passing	Effective Possession 2.Controlled Possession in the Middle Third	Press the ball carrier immediately	Deny opponents time and space to build-up
	Quick forward movement	Combination Play 1.Organised opponent	Limit Opponents passing options	Limit opponents ability to create scoring chances
	Make the field as big as possible	Combination play 2.Disorganised opponent	Make the field as small as possible	
		Individual Skill 1.To create scoring chances		
		Individual Skill 2. To convert scoring chances		
TEAM TASKS	(Fundamental Task to make the Key Principles Happen)			
PLAYER TASKS	(General and Position-specific)			
PLAYER ACTIONS	Positioning, First Touch, Running with the Ball, 1v1, Striking the ball, Communicating		Positioning, Pressing, Marking, Intercepting, Tackling, Communicating	

The concept of rotating through pre-determined themes, which serves us well in the Skill Acquisition and Game Training phases, will not apply now. However, the basic structure of the ideal training session is almost identical to those in the Game Training phase:

1. Welcome/explanation: 5 minutes
2. Warm Up: 15-20 minutes

3. Positioning Games: 20 minutes
4. Game Training component: 25-30 minutes
5. Training Game: 20-25 minutes
6. Warm Down/wrap up 5-10 minutes

The differences are:

The session themes are based largely on recent match performance, with a view to improvement in the next match.

- This requires from a coach the ability to properly analyse a game, define the 'football problems' and design sessions to improve the team's ability to solve these football problems.
- The Training Game can now be used as a Football Conditioning game. Football Conditioning Games are part of the Football Periodisation Model, developed by exercise physiologist Raymond Verheijen, which has been adopted by FFA.

The Football Periodisation Model is based on the principle that it's totally possible to get your players fit for playing football by playing football. This aligns perfectly with our vision that a holistic approach to coaching is not only the most educationally effective way but also the most time effective way. If done in the proper way, football training automatically becomes conditioning and therefore it's unnecessary and unwise to separate fitness training from football training.

In the Football Periodisation Model there are three types of conditioning games:

- The big games (8 v 8 or 9 v 9 or 10 v 10 or 11 v 11)
- The medium games (5 v 5 or 6 v 6 or 7 v 7)
- The small games (3 v 3 or 4 v 4)

Put simply, if these games are conducted in the right way, they develop the qualities of aerobic capacity and aerobic power specific to football players. However, a real understanding of this conditioning method, including football sprints, can only be gained by attending FFA's Advanced Coaching Courses.

TRAINING FOCUS IN THE PERFORMANCE PHASE

The Performance Phase starts when the puberty phase has ended and the growth spurt has come to a standstill. Generally this happens around the age of 16, but differs from individual to individual and, as stated before, girls generally reach this point earlier than boys.

Girls and boys diverge in their physical abilities as they enter puberty and move through adolescence. Higher levels of the hormone Testosterone allow boys to add muscle and even without much effort on their part, get stronger. In turn, they become less flexible.

Girls, as their levels of the hormone Estrogen increase, tend to add fat rather than muscle. They must train rigorously to get significantly stronger. Estrogen also makes girls' ligaments lax which



makes them more flexible than boys but also more prone to certain injuries such as ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) rupture.

Core Stability strength training is therefore an important training element in the Performance phase, especially for girls. However, it's unnecessary to do that in a gym since Core Stability programs can perfectly be done on the pitch as part of the warm-up. This way we avoid losing valuable football training time.

At this stage of development, the young adults are ready for high performance training. Coordination is back, the mental balance has been restored and the energy systems of the body are now effectively 'trainable'.

This is the moment that football-specific conditioning can start. At an earlier age so-called 'conditioning' is mostly pointless and generally a waste of time (or even dangerous if conducted inexpertly).

This is also the moment that winning really starts to matter. That's why the purpose of the Performance Phase is:

Learning how to perform/win as a team

So in the Performance Phase, the coach is very much focused on getting results. Training, therefore, is centred on fixing specific problems with the team's tactical performance.

TRAINING CYCLES/FREQUENCY

Regarding the 6-week cycles in the Performance Phase the following points are essential:

The session with the Football Conditioning Games must always be planned for the beginning of the week to avoid players still being fatigued on the day of the next game

We consider 4 sessions of 75-90 minutes and one game a maximum safe weekly workload for the Performance Phase (Advanced level only)

The planning and progression of the Football Conditioning Games requires expert knowledge of the Football Periodisation Model. It is dangerous to experiment with Football Conditioning without having the necessary knowledge

To give coaches a basic grasp of the concepts, we provide three sample Performance Phase sessions, based on hypothetical 'football problems' that a team might have. Each sample session shows how the Training Game can be changed to a Conditioning Game (one 'big', one 'medium' and one 'small' game), gaining a football fitness benefit while still working on the team's 'football problem'.