

# What does it take to make a great soccer player?

- References
  - US Soccer Federation Best Practices For Coaching in the US
  - US Soccer Federation/US Youth Soccer Association National Youth License
  - North Carolina Youth Soccer Academy Program

# The 10,000 Hour Rule

Scientific research has concluded that it takes eight-to-twelve years of training for a talented player to reach elite levels. This is called the ten-year or 10,000 hour rule, which translates to slightly more than three hours of practice daily for ten years (Ericsson, et al., 1993; Ericsson and Charness, 1994, Bloom, 1985, Salmela et al., 1998).

*A long-term commitment is required !*

# So if a long-term commitment is required, let's look at why older kids keep playing sports

(Based on a survey of 3900 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders)

## Boys

- 1) to have fun
- 2) to do something I am good at
- 3) to improve my skills
- 4) for the excitement of competition
- 5) to stay in shape
- 6) for the challenge of competition
- 7) to get exercise
- 8) to learn new skills
- 9) to play as a part of a team
- 10) to go to a higher level of competition

## Girls

- 1) to have fun
- 2) to stay in shape
- 3) to get exercise
- 4) to improve my skills
- 5) to do something I am good at
- 6) to learn new skills
- 7) for the excitement of competition
- 8) to play as a part of a team
- 9) to make new friends
- 10) for the challenge of competition

Ewing, M. & Seefeldt, V., (1989). *Participation and attrition patterns in American agency-sponsored and interscholastic sports: An executive summary*

# So where does winning games fit in all this?

- Kids always play to win; it's in their nature. They learn more and faster when they play to win. So we want it!
  - It's not necessary for adults to track the wins and losses for kids to play this way.
- Parents and coaches need to understand the conflict between coaching to win and coaching to develop players
  - The developmental approach to soccer requires that adults take a long-range view of their players' development and measure success by metrics other than immediate wins and losses.

So if you want your child to become a great player, they have to not quit! How many kids quit, at what ages and with what consequences?

- Western Australian School Children in 1996
  - 80% 11-12 year olds play sport
  - 57% of 16-17 year olds play sport
  - 42% of dropouts occurred between year 7-8
- In the US in 2010 over 20 million children register for sports
  - By age 13, 70% of these kids have stopped playing
- Lack of sports participation linked to
  - increased rate of school dropout
  - poorer grades
  - increased obesity



# And why do they quit?

Children stop playing sports for a variety of reasons. Six of the seven primary reasons are "ADULT CONTROLLED" behaviors. Can you guess which one isn't?

- Lack of Playing Time
- Overemphasis on Winning
- Other Activities are more interesting
- Lack of Fun
- Coaching/Adult Behaviors
- Dissatisfaction with Performance
- Lack of Social Support

## References:

US Youth Soccer : Soccer in the US - How do we measure Success

Elkind, David, Ph.D. 2007. ""The Power Of Play: how spontaneous, imaginative activities lead to happier, healthier children"". Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

# What do US Soccer and US Youth Soccer recommend (up to U12) as an improved environment to help build skills and retain players ?

- Provide player-centered, developmentally appropriate activities
- Emphasize the intrinsic pleasure of playing the game
  - no standings in leagues, championships or winners trophies
  - soccer festivals instead of tournaments
  - minimize adult intervention - free-play
- Guarantee minimum playing time in games
- Use small-sided games to maximize touches on the ball
- Provide gradual progression of field and team sizes

## References

US Soccer Federation - Best practices in Coaching soccer in the US

US Youth Soccer - Soccer in the US - How do we measure Success

# How does our participation in PGSI compare with these national recommendations?

- Provide player-centered, developmentally appropriate activities *YES!*
- Emphasize the intrinsic pleasure of playing the game
  - no standings in leagues, championships or winners trophies *YES!*
  - soccer festivals instead of tournaments *YES!*
  - lots of emphasis on free-play *YES!*
- Guarantee minimum playing time in games *YES!*
- Use small-side games to maximize touches on the ball *YES!*
- Provide gradual progression of field and team sizes *YES!*



# National Youth License

## player-centered soccer

- **SMALL-SIDED GAMES**

- Used in training sessions for all ages groups and levels of play
- Must be used in Zone 1 to accelerate a winning style of play
  - Smaller field
  - Fewer players
- When SSG is used for match play in Zone 1 the outcomes are:
  - Enhances tactical awareness
  - Increases physical fitness
  - Teaches teamwork
  - Upgrades ball skills



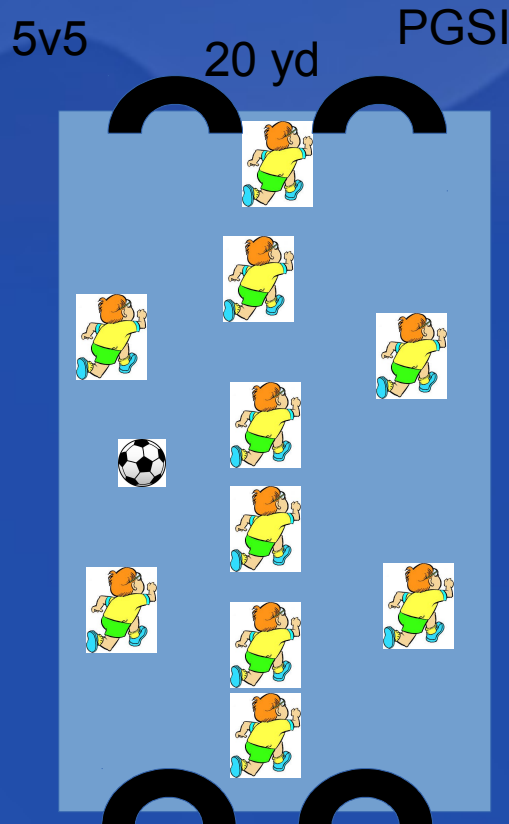
# The importance of the small-sided format for developing ball skills

Most kids will tell you they want to play on a bigger field, bigger team or shoot at bigger goals, but for your child to build ball skills at the early years you want to maximize both their interaction with the ball and their goal scoring opportunities

Look at this comparison of numbers between the PGSI experience and the typical county model ...

# A comparison of PGSI U10 field/team size with typical County model

- ratio of area 5:1
- ratio of field players: 1.5:1
- *Probability of being near the ball or the goal 10 times higher on the smaller field*



*There's only one ball on the field!  
On a smaller field your child is closer to it!!*

80 yd

7v7

50 yd



# The Academy Model is the National Response to these issues

- Supported by US Soccer and US Youth Soccer.
  - Why?
    - To put the focus on player development, building greater technical skills and having more fun in the process



# What is the Academy Program?

Academy programs have emerged as a 21st century alternative to the frustrating shortfalls in soccer development displayed by most pre-teens. This void is heavily influenced by coaching quality and the pressures to win at critical periods in the development process.

Academy programs seek to improve individual player development, satisfaction and retention, and to build a less pressured youth soccer environment for coaches, adult spectators, and match officials.

Academy Approach for Youth Soccer is Supported by:

United States Soccer Federation

US Youth Soccer





# Why we need the Academy Program?

## *Removing the Pressure to Win*

**“Too often in this country, youth coaches sacrifice learning skills for winning games.... – US Women’s National team Member, Mia Hamm**

- No scores, results or standings will be kept for the academy program. The focus is on individual development and enjoyment free from standings and the pressure of results.

<b>Characteristics of Coaches Focused On.....</b>	
<b>Winning</b>	<b>Development</b>
Results Dominated	Excellence Dominated
Task-Centered	Player Centered
Focused on Short-Term	Focused on Long Term
Emotional	Analytical
Instinctive	Careful Planning
“Me”	“We”
Authoritarian	Democratic
Yells	Sells
Speaks	Listens then Speaks
Trainer	Teacher

Some of the Academy concepts are catching on. Look at what local travel leagues are doing regarding standings

- NCSL
  - largest DC area boys travel league
  - parents spend typically >\$1000/yr to participate
  - *no standings until U11*
- WAGS
  - largest DC area girls travel league
  - parents spend typically >\$1000/yr to participate
  - *no standings until U12*

*Eliminating standings in youth soccer helps coaches focus more on developing players ! If the travel leagues are doing it, shouldn't rec leagues do it as well?*





He thinks it's all over.....

But it's only just begun.....

“We have taken away the game and left the competition”

Ron Quinn, US Youth Soccer



# Academy Program: Parents Role

“When asked what embarrasses them most, the overwhelming response from children is parents yelling.” (www.MomsTeam.com – Survey)

## Think of the soccer field as a playground!

- Emphasize enjoyment
- Encourage your child regardless of success
- Cheer for all Children
- Applaud a good effort no matter who makes it
- It's okay to talk to other teams parents
- **Be a parent – not a coach**
- Resist the urge to critique

## 6 Guidelines for the Sidelines:

1. Cheer
2. Relax and Let Them Play
3. Yelling Directions = Distraction
4. Remember, they are just kids having fun
5. Have reasonable expectations





# National Youth License ethics

What child wants to be told what to do while they are playing? Just cheer them on but don't give them directions!



Dallas Dorsey, director of coaching for the Opelika Crush, a very small club in Opelika, AL.  
A small town outside of Auburn.



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So what does it take to create a  
great player?

# No one knows a magic formula but these things are necessary

- They need a long-term commitment to the game
  - your player needs to be one of the 25-30% who does not drop out at age 12-14!
    - To increase the chance they will stay in soccer, provide a technically sound, supportive environment that emphasizes that soccer is a game played to have fun
- They need lots of touches on the ball and lots of goal scoring opportunities when young to build technical skills
  - keep them on a small field playing on small teams as long as you can!

*Does this sound like a good formula for a "recreational" program designed to maximize participation?*

# National Youth License

develop the person first and the player second

IF WE TAKE CARE IN THE BEGINNING  
THE END WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF

