

FRONT PAGE:
New PLAY PRATICE PLAY
SESSION PLANNER

INTRODUCTION

When children arrive at practice they have little desire to stand in lines, run laps, perform drills, or be lectured, they simply want to have fun, connect with their teammates, and learn through engaging and enjoyable activities. Therefore, it is important for coaches to keep these factors in mind when creating and designing their practice environments. As for practice design, the debate about the optimal quantity, quality, type, sequencing and combination of learning activities during Zone 1 development (ages between of 6-12), is ongoing within the athlete development and performance literature.¹⁻⁷ While there is no single best approach to practice design,⁵ athlete development research indicates that participation in different types of learning activities (i.e., child-led or adult-led, structured or unstructured) such as ‘informal play’⁸, ‘deliberate play’^{1,2,9-11} or more structured activities such ‘deliberate practice’¹² are important influences in the athlete development process.⁵ Recent studies, specific to soccer, indicate that high levels of engagement in low structured informal play or soccer specific deliberate play activities are an important component in the athlete development process and practice pathway of high-level performers.^{4,8,13-14}

PLAYERS LEARN:

what they like	intrinsic motivation as the driver for learning
what they need	transfer, no gap between the training and the game
to read, analyze and decide	how players perceive and explain a situation is the driver for their behavior
to be creative	looking for solutions
to reflect	thinking about experiences and how to use experiences
to learn	developing and improving learning habits
to be independent critical thinkers	independent/social and responsible/accountable adults

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE DESIGN



At the Grassroots level, the U.S. Soccer Coach Education Department is committed to an evidenced-based approach to coaching education and player development. Evidence-Based Coaching (EBC) focuses on integrating three key components; 1. The best available research on player development, 2. Coaching expertise and, 3. An appreciation of the needs and values of the learner (i.e. player). With that, in an attempt to create a developmentally appropriate practice environment, U.S. Soccer has adopted a three stage practice plan model (i.e., 'Play-Practice-Play'). This approach aligns with the best available research on athlete development pathways and is designed with the intent of maximizing player enjoyment, intrinsic motivation, and skill development.^{2, 15-16}

THE 3 PHASE TRAINING SESSION: PLAY-PRACTICE-PLAY MODEL (ZONE 1 DEVELOPMENT)

TRAINING PHASE	PHASE 1: FIRST PLAY	PHASE 2: PRACTICE	PHASE 3: SECOND PLAY
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning by playing • Deliberate play (Cote) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and quality improvement through game like activities • Play-Practice activities (Lauder) • Teaching Games for Understanding (Griffin & Butler) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual learning by playing the game • Let them play (Fonseca, Tamarit)
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fun introduction to practice • Games orientate players to the training goal (2v2, 3v3, 4v4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities/game-situations focuses players on the training goal • Conscious learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training goal in the game format (based on maximum roster size) • Opportunity to implement their learning
ACTIVITY CHARACTERISTICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun, inclusive, implicit learning, creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun, actively involved, repetitions, challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun, even numbers, position rotations, rules
TEACHING ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring ('the game teaches') • Five elements (1-5) • Key words • Guided questions • Positive reinforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active teaching • Five elements (1-5) • Key words • Guided questions • Positive reinforcement • Demonstration • Feedback • Learning circle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation • Checking for understanding • Five elements (1-5) • Key words • Guided questions • Positive reinforcement • Feedback

U.S. SOCCER SIX TASKS OF A COACH



1	Coaching Games (CG) Create an environment which supports and guides players toward giving their best contribution to the game in order to further develop and score more goals than the opponent.
2	Coaching Training Sessions (CTS) Facilitate an environment which supports and guides players on the field in order to develop them to their full potential as well as prepare players/the team for the game.
3	Leading the Team (LT) Create an environment of inclusion and engage players based on agreed upon team behaviors and goals.
4	Leading the Player (LP) Give players individual, unconditional attention and mentor them to fulfill their potential.
5	Managing the Performance Environment (MPE) Influence off-the-field circumstances and persons in order to create the best possible conditions for the development and performance of the players.
6	Leadership (L) Demonstrate coaching actions which are guided by a player-centered philosophy in order to accomplish defined team and player goals.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF A TRAINING ACTIVITY

1. ORGANIZED: IS THE ACTIVITY ORGANIZED IN THE RIGHT WAY?

2. GAME-LIKE: IS THE ACTIVITY GAME-LIKE?

3. REPETITION: IS THERE REPETITION, WHEN LOOKING AT THE OVERALL GOAL OF THE SESSION?

4. CHALLENGING: ARE THE PLAYERS BEING CHALLENGED? (IS THERE THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN BEING SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL?)

5. COACHING: IS THERE EFFECTIVE COACHING, BASED ON THE AGE AND LEVEL OF THE PLAYERS?

Training Session Planner

GOALS:

PLAYER ACTIONS:

KEY QUALITIES:

PRACTICE: Play One (international play)

Two Games of

2v2

4v4

OBJECTIVE:

ORGANIZATION:

KEY WORDS:

GUIDED QUESTIONS:

ANSWERS:

PRACTICE: (Core Activity)

OBJECTIVE:

ORGANIZATION:

KEY WORDS:

GUIDED QUESTIONS:

ANSWERS:

NOTES: Start here at the Core Activity after the Play 1 phase. If the challenge is too difficult, move to the Less Challenging Activity. If it is too easy, move to the More Challenging Activity. Spend a total of 20 minutes in the Practice Phase.

PRACTICE: Core (Less Challenging)

OBJECTIVE:

ORGANIZATION:

KEY WORDS:

GUIDED QUESTIONS:

ANSWERS:

NOTES: Start with the Core Activity and determine if the level of challenge is appropriate for the players. Move to this Less Challenging Activity if the Core Activity is too difficult.

PRACTICE: (More Challenging)

OBJECTIVE:

ORGANIZATION:

KEY WORDS:

GUIDED QUESTIONS:

ANSWERS:

NOTES: Start with the Core Activity and move to this More Challenging Activity if the Core Activity is too easy.

PLAY: 2nd Play Phase (The Game)

OBJECTIVE:

ORGANIZATION:

KEY WORDS:

GUIDED QUESTIONS:

ANSWERS:

NOTES: Play a regular game with even numbers and follow FIFA Laws of the game

Training Session Self-Reflection Questions?

1. How did you do in achieving the goals of the training session?

2. What did you do well?

3. What could you do better?