



# Technical Manual

## Ontario Player Development League (OPDL)

Technical Guidelines for OPDL License Holders

Play. Inspire. Unite.

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# PART I - INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Vision

Ontario's best players are given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## 1.2 Mission

To help Ontario's soccer best become their best.

## 1.3 Values

- **Excellence** - There is an uncompromising commitment to excellence in all areas of the League, from training design, to work ethic, to League operations, to base standards. This is the cornerstone of the League.
- **Accountability** - Through the active enforcement of standards, all stakeholders in the OPDL are accountable at the player level, with regard to adherence to training curriculum and development requirements, and at the organizational level with regard to standards of quality in training and operational capacity.
- **Commitment** - There is a culture of commitment to high standards, at organizational and individual level, that is uncompromising and routinely pushes the system to improve to a higher level.
- **Growth** - There is an understanding that the process of self-development and improvement for everyone is continuous and never-ending and the process is embraced and routinely supported by all.
- **Integrity** - All involved in the OPDL conduct themselves with highest level of professional integrity, work ethic and good character, where people are treated with respect, courtesy and care.
- **Honesty** - All involved in the OPDL manage affairs in an honest and transparent manner, where the development of the participating players is openly placed as the priority in all actions and decision-making at all levels.



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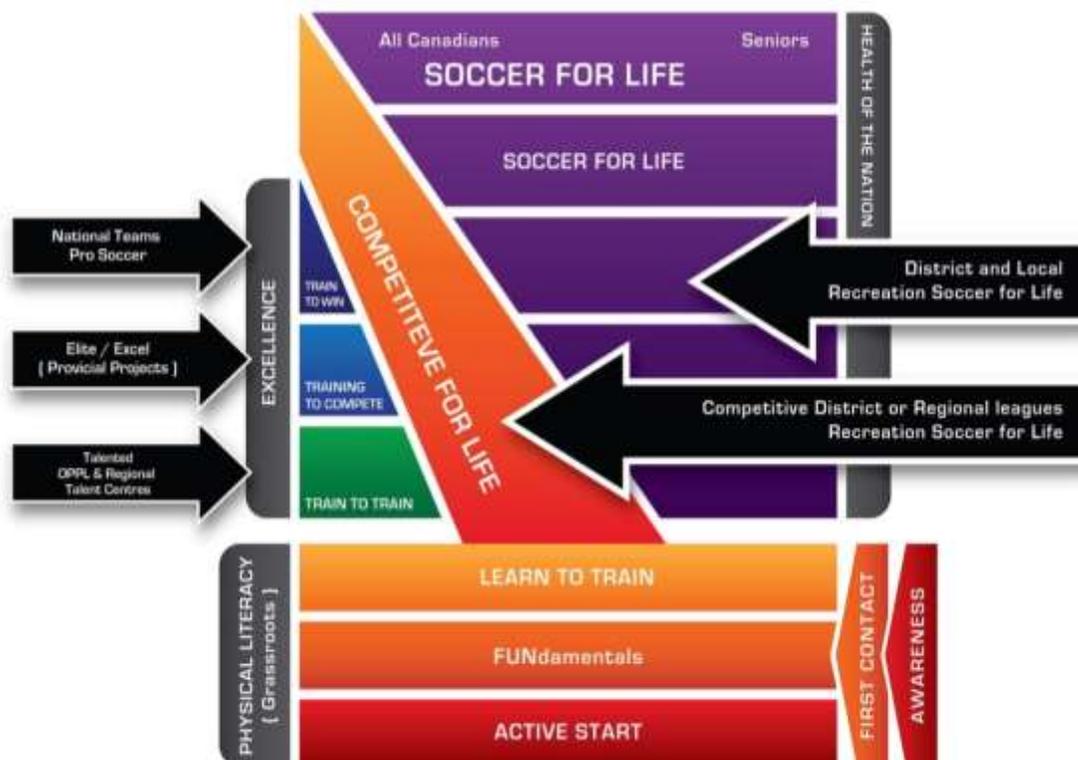


## PART II - ONTARIO SOCCER LTPD TALENTED PATHWAY

The technical vision derived from Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) is:

*“Lead the development of a unified soccer family where the needs of the player are always put first; ensuring every player has the best chance to reach their potential whether that potential is playing recreational soccer or being called up for Canada.”*

The outline of Ontario Soccer’s Long-Term Development Program is as follows:



Ontario Soccer’s Long-Term Development Program (LTPD) has evolved from Canadian Sport for Life’s Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD). LTAD is a federal government backed and funded initiative with the purpose of improving sport and recreation at all levels across Canada.

There are seven common stages between LTAD and LTPD and diagramed above

1. Active Start
2. FUNDamentals
3. Learning to Train
4. Training to Train
5. Training to Compete
6. Training to Win
7. Active for Life (Soccer for Life)



**Talented Pathway Vision**  
 Ontario's best players are given the opportunity to achieve reach their full potential



**Soccer for Life Pathway Vision**  
 Provide an enjoyable and challenging environment that keeps all participants returning to soccer

**Grassroots Vision**  
 Making soccer more child friendly, to develop better players and people

**The OPDL, as part of LTPD and the Talented Pathway program is focused on players, coaches, officials, support staff and administration. This document and the information within applies to those particular groups.**

The **Training to Train** Stage is the first stage of the Talented Pathway and covers the OPDL age of U13 and U14. The focus of this stage is to identify the elite player.



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## PART III – TECHNICAL PHILOSOPHY

In order to understand the chosen technical philosophy for players in the Talented Pathway of LTPD, it is first necessary to understand where the game is going and what the very best players and teams are doing.

### 3.1 Forecast

Where is the game going? Over the next few years, the following will characterize the evolution of the game:

- **Athletic** – Physical prowess will be enhanced without compromising skill
- **Creative** – Players with great individual ability will thrive
- **Efficient** – The ability to keep the ball longer and/or attack quicker than ever before
- **Faster** – Players will move faster, they will think faster and the ball will therefore travel faster
- **Intelligent** – Tactical decision making by individual players and teams will eclipse previous levels
- **Organic** – Game situations will change constantly – a culmination of the previously listed factors - and players will need to show the flexibility necessary to adapt to those changes

### 3.2 Quality Characteristics of World Class Players

1. Technique on demand
2. Tactical flexibility
3. Dominate 1v1 situations
4. Versatile fitness
5. Committed to excellence
6. Quality of character/personality

### 3.3 Trends

What are the best teams and players doing to influence this forecast? The standards are rising. What do Canadian players do well out of those standards? Where do Canadian players need to improve? FIFA releases technical reports at the end of each of their major competitions. These reports provide a detailed analysis of the teams and players that competed. A fair means of comparison for the players and teams of the OPDL would be the U17 World Cup held every two years for females and males. Of the last three of these events our Canadian females have competed in all three while our males have competed in one. A look at how Canada fared versus the other participating countries reveals the following about our development of future elite soccer players.



When speaking of the performances of Canada's U17's FIFA says the following things:

- Athletic players (female)
- Patient build-up play from the back through midfield (male)
- Strong, hard-working players (both)
- Compact defence (male)
- Defence-splitting passes (male)
- Determination (both)
- Disciplined, well-organized defence (female)
- Counter-attacks (female)
- Influential goalkeeper (female)
- Influential individual players (female)
- Players with pace (female)
- Deep defensive block (female)
- Rapid transition from defence to attack (female)
- Immediate pressure after losing the ball (female)

Here is a listing of the qualities of the top U17 teams at these competitions. These are statements that were not said about Canada and therefore represent potential areas to which we could look for making improvements. They are broken into categories based on the reference of the statement:

#### **Technical**

- Good control, good ability to run with the ball
- Game-opening diagonal balls
- Good variety of game-opening passes
- Good finishing ability
- Long-range shots
- Strong dribbling skills
- Excellent passing game – good options for the player in possession
- Good individual technique

#### **Mental**

- Winning mentality
- Ability to stay focused after falling behind

#### **Physical**

- Ability to change direction/pace suddenly

#### **Attacking Tactical**

- Constructive build-up play
- Flexibility and movement
- Attacks using the width
- Effective use of fullbacks
- Dangerous at set pieces (attacking corner kicks, free kicks, special throw-in routines)
- Good wing play



- Ability to break through following successful pressure
- Excellent off-the-ball movement
- Good links between the team lines

#### **Defending Tactical**

- High defensive line, goalkeeper covered the space behind the defence well
- Aerial dominance in defence
- Midfield pressing

#### **General Tactical**

- Tactical flexibility (adapting to the state of play)

### **3.4 Canadian Strengths**

From this overview, the following can be said about the strengths of performances of our of top youth players on the world stage:

1. **Committed** – Our players are very hard working and determined.
2. **Athletic** – Our players are blessed with good genes and could most likely excel in any other sport but have chosen soccer.
3. **Defensive** – Our players are disciplined and well-organized defensively.
4. **Influential** – We do have individual players that are on par with the best in the world for their age.

### **3.5 Canadian Weaknesses**

It may be more striking to notice what is not being said and therefore constitutes the weaknesses of our top youth players:

1. **Technique** – Our players are not known for their high level of technical ability.
2. **Attacking** – Our players are not known for their ability to play attacking soccer.
3. **Culture** – Our players are not known for their innate sense of how the game is played (e.g., we do not know when to speed the game up or when to slow it down in order to influence the result in our favour).
4. **Mindset** – Our players need to improve their mental toughness and willingness to win.

### **3.6 Opportunities**

While maintaining our strengths, we must improve in these four areas of weakness if we hope to make any further gains on the international stage. We can improve in these four areas with the right mix of developmentally appropriate training, competition and coaching. The OPDL aims to address this need for players ages 13 and up. However, it is important that changes are made at the grassroots level in order to ensure we are nurturing the transformation of our weaknesses into strengths starting earlier than age 13. While this is the case for you the OPDL license holder it also



holds true for every club across Ontario that produces youth players. We must do a better job of developing our soccer talent at all youth age levels.

### **3.7 The Ontario Technical Philosophy**

In light of the future direction of the game and our strengths and weaknesses, Ontario Soccer presents its overarching philosophy for players in the Talented Pathway of LTPD:

*Develop a modern style of play that produces an efficient brand of soccer with individual and collective habits of creativity, skill and control.*



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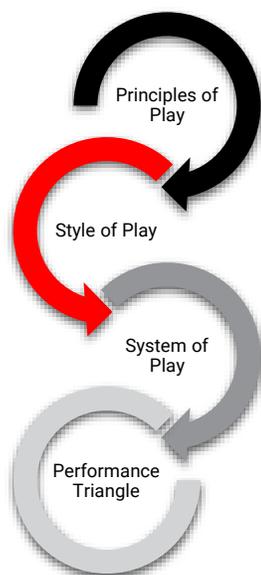
## PART IV – TECHNICAL BRAND/IDENTITY

### 4.1 Introduction

Best practice derived from the FIFA U17 World Cups, along with advances in sports science, provides us with the foundation for the development of talent. As it has been noted already, players today are quicker, faster and stronger, technically more proficient and tactically more astute. It is becoming scarcer to see a player today rise to the top without the support of a well-structured development program behind her or him.

The forward thinking soccer countries that have realized this have moved on to create systems and structures to identify and develop talent within youth players. These systems have become part of the country's soccer culture and the philosophy becomes woven throughout all levels right up to the national teams. With the design of these programs well in hand for many soccer powers, they now look to innovation as the means by which to find the edge on their counterparts.

Before immersing ourselves in every little detail of successful design from these other countries, we first have to ensure that it best serves our specific needs as Canadians. The appropriate approach is to take the best practices from existing designs and merge them with our own Canadian-specific innovations. There will always be roadblocks for us to contend with, like the physical size of our country or the lack of funding available, in creating a national program. It is therefore important to be creative and think outside the box as we move forward.



In this process of invention it is worth noting that there will be differences of opinion within the regions of our country about how best to play the game. There are elements of soccer that are flexible and open to interpretation. However, there are also components that are ageless and unchanging in their application to the game. It is important to be able to identify the fixed from the adaptable.

**Principles of Play** – These are the attacking and defending constants of our game and do not change wherever you go in the world.

**Style of Play** – In order to honour the principles of play, these are the overarching choices a team or organization makes around how to go about attacking and defending. This is the brand or identity.

**System of Play** – The various positional frameworks available to best bring to life the chosen style of play.

**Performance Triangle** – A combination of three concepts (mindset, skillset and structure) that serves as a compass for a team's style of play and system of play.



## 4.2 Principles of Play - Attacking

### Support/Depth

Passing options provided through 360° to the player on the ball.

### Penetration

The ability to eliminate opponents from being goal side of the ball.

### Dispersal

Positively using the large playing space by having players spread out all.

### Mobility/Movement

The movement of players around the field in order to cause opponents problems.

### Surprise

The use of deception to hide a team's attacking intentions.

### Individualism

The ability of an individual player to do the unexpected.



## 4.3 Principles of Play – Defending

### Support/Depth

Counters attacking support/depth. The arrangement of players to deny the opposition the opportunity to pass or run in anticipation of

### Delay/Containment

Counters penetration. Slowing the forward movement of the ball by opponents.

### Compactness

Counters dispersal. The resistance to being stretched and spread out by the opponents.

### Balance/Cover

Counters mobility/movement. The fluent defensive team movements made to contain and resist the opponents' attacking runs.

### Control/Restraint

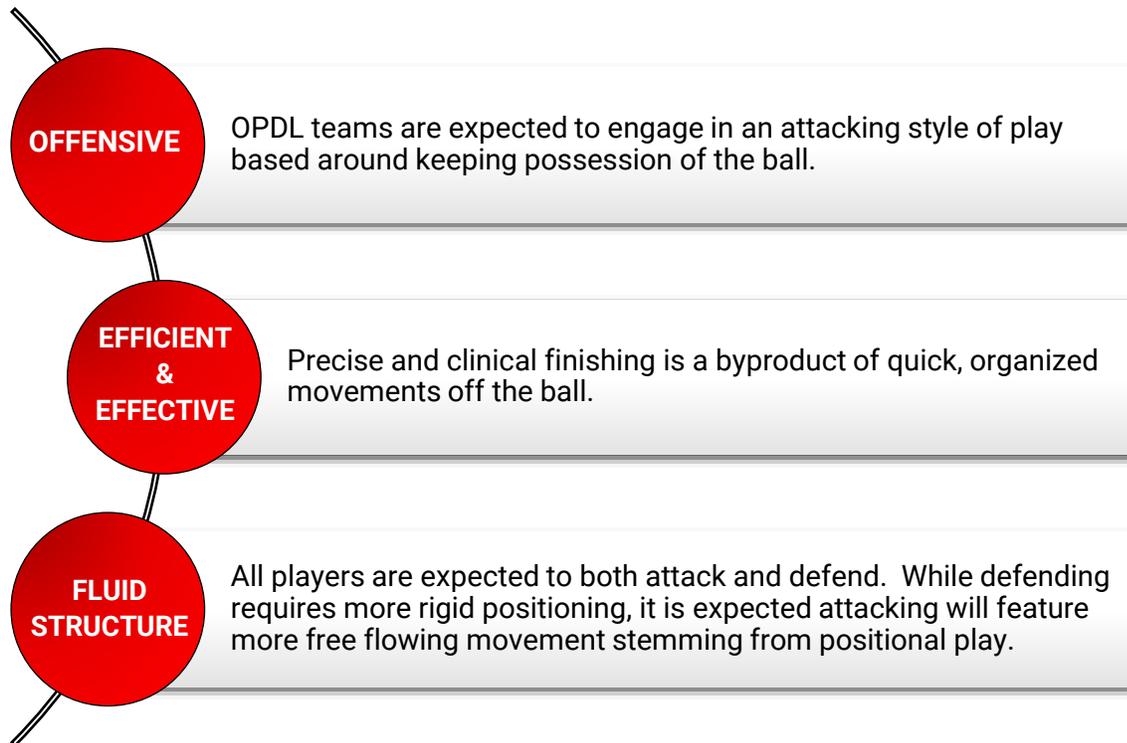
Counters attacking surprise. Defending with composure, individual/ team understanding and awareness.

### Surprise

Counters Individualism. The use of unusual and unexpected defensive actions.



#### 4.4 Style of Play Summary



#### 4.5 The Moments of the Game and Style of Play



**The attacking moments of the game impact style of play and include:**

**Produce**

Score a goal, take a shot or create a goal scoring opportunity. Efficiency and effectiveness are the keys. This is an area within the OPDL that players will require some development.

**Penetrate**

Play the ball forward in a controlled manner in order to try and produce. The more penetrative the pass, the more opponents that can be eliminated from defending the ball. This is an area within the OPDL that players will also require some development.

**Possess**

When immediate forward play is denied, possess the ball and probe for an opening. Speed of play. Keep the ball moving but vary that movement – slow or fast as the situation arises. Increased possession boosts the number of opportunities to play the ball forward which in turn enhances the chances of a goal scoring opportunity. This is an area within the OPDL that players will require significant development in order to be on par with other strong soccer playing nations.

**The defending moments of the game also impact style of play and include:**

**Press**

Get the ball back as quickly as possible by playing to our current defensive and athletic strengths as elite Canadian players. This is done using zonal defending principles. This is an area within the OPDL that players should already show themselves to be strong.

**Transitions too impact style of play and require the team to answer an immediate question before proceeding with the appropriate plan of action:**

**Offence to  
Defence**

Are we organized as a team? If yes, press the ball. If no, then first get organized into defensive shape/positions. Beware of the counter attack.

**Defence to  
Offence**

Are the opponents organized as a team? If no, counter attack quickly to take advantage of their lack of defensive shape/positioning. If yes, possess the ball but remember to possess with the intent of producing a goal scoring opportunity or a goal.

While athletically we have the physical capacity to make quick transitions this is an area that will require our OPDL players to develop a true cultural understanding of how the game of soccer is played.



## 4.6 System of Play<sup>1</sup>

OPDL teams are expected to play a **1-4-3-3** formation.

This system can be played with either one holding and two attacking or one attacking and two holding midfielder. It is also expected that all OPDL teams will play with a back four and not back three. Four allows both appropriate defensive coverage as well as the opportunity for the wing backs to get forward on the attack. The OPDL's rationale for this decision is based on the fact that in a 1-4-3-3:

- There is significant triangulation which enhances combination play.
- Increased opportunities for interchanges in position in order to create mobility.
- The ability to play out from the back in a controlled manner is increased.
- Width in attack, especially high up the field, is easy to establish.
- Typically leads to a central midfield numerical advantage.
- Upon loss of possession, immediate pressure can occur with three forwards.
- Positionally sound defensively.
- Converts easily into a 1-4-5-1.

The 1-4-3-3 with one holding and two attacking midfielders



The 1-4-3-3 with two holding and one attacking midfielders

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Canada Soccer



To play 1-4-3-3, players coming into the OPDL will already need to possess the following:

1. Efficient and effective ball control skills.
2. Efficient and effective short range passing skills.
3. A basic understanding of support play.
4. Effective turns with ball and basic ball manipulation skills.
5. Basic ball retention understanding.
6. Basic running with the ball skills (and some players with dribbling skills).
7. Basic heading skills.
8. Basic pressing and marking skills.

Once in the OPDL, players will need to be educated through training on the following in order to play the 1-4-3-3:

- Increased range of controlling skills.
- Extended variety of short range passing skills and the addition of basic medium and long range passing skills.
- Continued development of combination play skills.
- Appropriate disguise/deception on all skills involving contact with the ball.
- Ability to protect and manipulate the ball under pressure.
- Increased heading skills.
- Improved support play with appreciation for movement in carrying out that support.
- Safety versus risk when in possession.
- Increased running with the ball skills.
- Increased marking, tracking and challenging skills.
- Ability to read the game defensively for the purpose of making interceptions and challenges.

#### 4.7 Competency Scale for Player Technical Habits.

In section 4.6, the technical habits necessary to perform within a formation that will encourage an attacking style of play were outlined. Ontario Soccer will evaluate players based on a competency scale within each technical habit. The scale will use the following four indicators:

1. Introduce
2. Develop
3. Refine
4. Perfect
5. Maintain

**Introduce** – Start the player’s relationship to the skill with a proper introduction to its fundamentals.

**Develop** – Once introduced, the skill must now be repeated continuously and correctly in order to make it reliable. While this will happen primarily in training, the skill should also feature in games.



**Refine** – Now that basic development has occurred, players combine this skill with other skills and tactics in the game environment.

**Perfect** - The player takes the skill and adapts it specifically to his/her individual needs. At this point, their execution of the skill may look different from another player's execution.

**Maintain** – When skills are refined and perfected or when there is no longer a need to continually refine or perfect skills, players should then hold their skills at the status quo.

See Appendix A for a complete guide to the skills against which players should be compared.

## 4.8 Individual Characteristics to be Developed for the Style of Play™

### TECHNICAL

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**Passing and Receiving** – Continuous movement of the ball on the ground over a variety of distances.

**Shooting** – Learn to shoot from a variety of ranges and encouraged to shoot from appropriate distances.

**Ball Control and Turning** – Keep tight and continuous control of the ball and possess a variety of turning techniques to escape the opponent.

### TACTICAL

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**Playing Out from the Back** – It is important that all teams display a comfort in playing the ball from their goalkeeper to their defenders through to their midfielders and on to their forwards.

**Possession** – It is expected teams will try to keep possession of the ball using limited touches on the ball. Players will be encouraged to receive, then pass and then offer themselves as support to the ball again. In developing this possession ability teams must then learn how to most efficiently and effectively move the ball from area to area of the field.

**Transition** – Positioning within the team's formation is important to transition. When possession is lost players must quickly work to regain it. Upon regaining possession, proper positioning allows for the consideration of an immediate counter attack.

### PHYSICAL

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**Speed and Agility** – Speed (or the lack thereof) decides games. Agility is the characteristic that most sets soccer players apart from other types of athletes in other sports.



**Endurance** – The key actions in the game are a direct result of the application of speed. The faster that players can recover from these high intensity episodes and the more fully they can recover, the more effective they will be.

**Strength and Power** – Strength is the application of force. Power is strength and speed combined. Soccer players first need to be strong (especially the core) so as to move towards the development of power. Strong muscles are also less susceptible to injury.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL

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**Intrinsically Motivated** – The relentless desire to be the best comes from within. This creates great commitment towards the program and an intense need to succeed.

**Self-Belief** – Clearly sees playing for Canada or playing professionally in their future.

**Details-Oriented** – Determined attitude towards getting things done right. No detail is too small and no amount of repetition is too much if it means achieving success.

## SOCIAL

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**Lifestyle Choice** - Training and being an athlete are lifestyle choices that come with a high price in the form of effort and sacrifice. This means missing out or limiting involvement in a number of events common to teenagers.

**Cooperation** – Every player's individual goals are best achieved through the continued development and success of the team. Players must be able to work effectively as part of a unit.

**Respect and Discipline** – The development of a player's personal character is the golden thread that runs through both their conduct on and off the field.

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<sup>π</sup>This information adapted from the United States Soccer Federation US Soccer Curriculum

For more specific details on the continuum of characteristics to be developed in players in the **Training to Train** stage of LTPD, please refer to Appendix A.



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## 4.9 The Performance Triangle<sup>2</sup>

Like a GPS, the Performance Triangle helps consolidate direction. It cannot tell you where to go but it can help you get there. Here, the 'where to go' refers to the principles of play, style of play and system of play. The Performance Triangle brings that altogether.

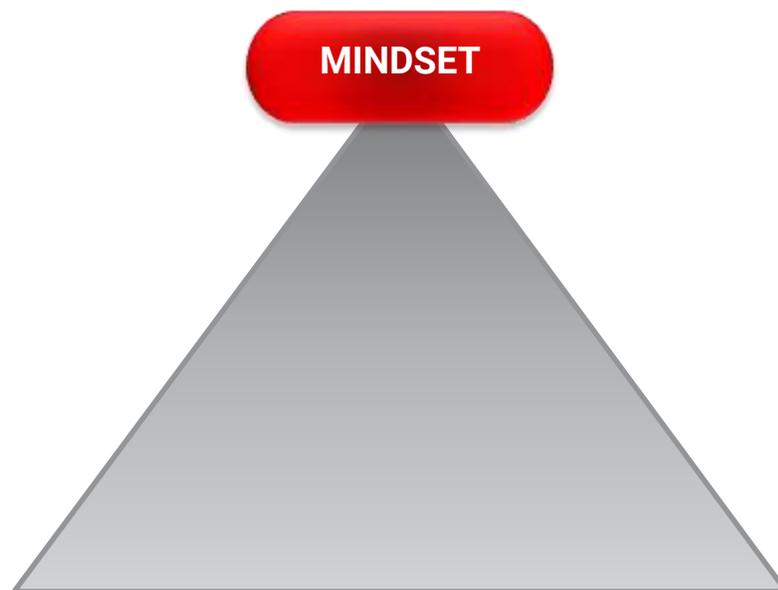
**Mindset** – Drives intensity. A mental attitude that determines our behaviour that can influence the style of play and emotional approach to the game.

**Skillset** – Drives accuracy. This is composed of technical habits and physical influencers. A technical habit is a routine of behaviour that is repeated regularly under pressure and tends to occur subconsciously. A physical influencer is an individual trainable athletic aspect that can enhance the playing style or philosophy of the team.

**Structure** – Drives clarity. The team's selection (i.e., who is playing what position) and shape (i.e., attacking and defending organization of players).

## 4.10 The Ontario Soccer Game Model

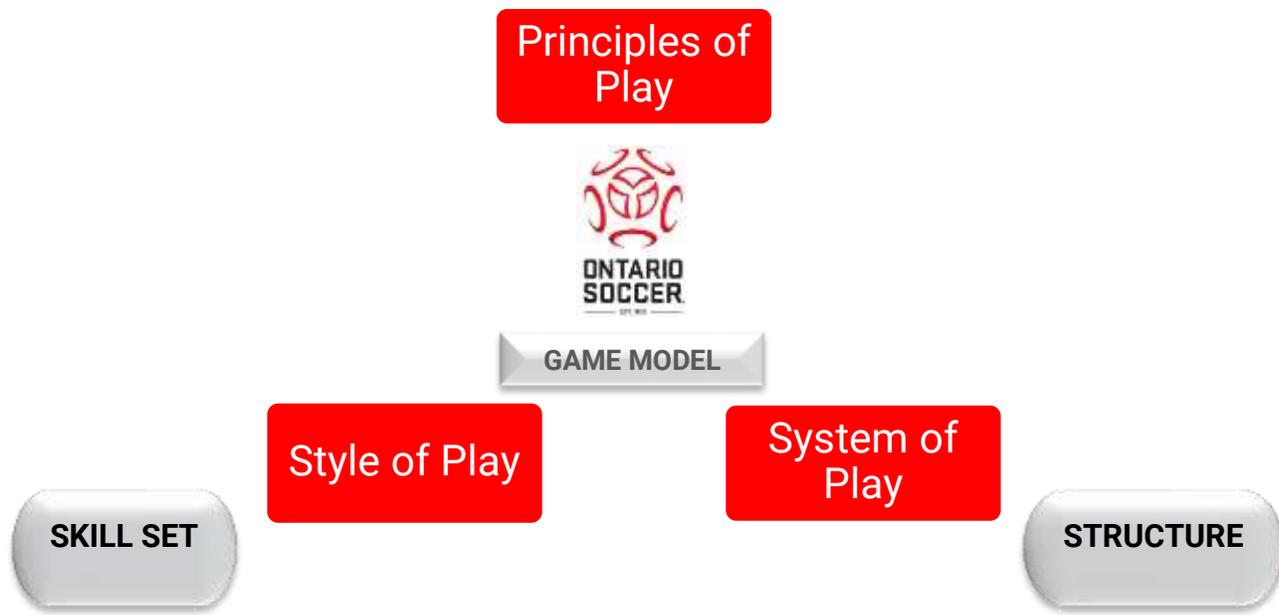
The combination of the Performance Triangle, system of play, style of play and principles of play as they were outlined above creates a unique provincial/national identity. This brand of soccer connects us to those strong soccer playing nations around the world while still honouring the elements that Canadian players do well.



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<sup>2</sup> Created by Dr. Ceri Evans, Gazing Performance Systems, 2008





This game model and subsequent technical brand/identity will be broken down in further detail during OPDL coach education events.

## COACHES

The following practice methods should be used in educating OPDL players about the principles of play, style of play and system of play.

**Technical Practice** – Unopposed practice with the emphasis on the development of a game technique. *Technique* is the pure mechanics of performing an action like passing or heading.

**Skill Practice** – Opposed practice with the emphasis on developing the bond of technique and decision making. *Skill* is the application of technique in a game-like situation.

**Functional Practice** – A situation in which a player of small group of players develop and understanding of their attacking and/or defending roles, responsibilities and accompanying skills.

**Small-Sided Game** – A directional game-practice situation involving goalkeepers playing in teams less than eleven-a-side.

**Squad practice** – A directional, game-type practice situation in which the playing area may be appropriately divided or zoned (e.g., grids) to suit the numbers and the needs of the activity.

**Phase of Play** – A practice situation utilizing the full width of the pitch but with a reduced length and involving team units that work on their attacking or defending tactical understanding.

**Eleven-a-Side Practice** – The final practice progression. This is used to develop team tactical understanding and takes place on a full field with normal rules.



## PART V – SUPPORT

### 5.1 Coach Expectations

In general, OPDL coach development includes:

1. Pre-season, in season and/or post season workshops/seminars hosted by Ontario Soccer.
  - OPDL head coaches and their TD's/CHC's must attend.
  - OPDL assistant coaches and goalkeeper coaches do not attend.
2. Regional Talent Centre training events.
  - Head coaches and goalkeeper coaches must attend and will conduct both on field sessions and participate in classroom education.
  - TD's/CHC's may attend on an observation basis only.
  - Assistant coaches do not attend.

### 5.2 Coach Development

The goal of coach development within the OPDL is to provide players aspiring to be world-class with world-class coaches.

A world-class coach should be able to:

1. Create a positive relationship and learning environment with a player (or group of players).
2. Implement a suitably challenging training program matching requirements of the activity to the age/stage of development of the participants.
3. Create and deliver a series of coaching sessions linked to an overall plan that leads to significant and sustainable improvements in participant competence and confidence.
4. Assist players in moving to the next higher level within the Talented Pathway of LTPD.

There are three points of awareness the OPDL coach needs to contemplate in his/her planning:

- **Awareness #1** - Concentrate on providing a solid foundation at the youth level.
- **Awareness #2** - A player's technical ability dictates the quality of that player's performance level from a tactical perspective. Therefore, learning techniques and mastering them as executable skill actions within the game is a top priority.
- **Awareness #3** - If technique is the raw mechanical action required to perform an activity – like a push pass with the inside of the foot – then skill is the tactical awareness of when and where to use a particular technique. Coaching activities used to improve technique in training must lead to the transfer and creation of skill that can be used in a game. Tactical game behavior must improve as a result of the coach's selected training methods.



The coach development principles include:

- **Outcome-Focused** – All coaching activities must make a positive contribution to achieving our coach development goal.
- **Player-Centred** – Based on the needs of the player in the OPDL and aligned to the stage of development of that player.
- **Inclusive** – Acknowledges the needs of all players regardless of current ability level.
- **Applicable/Practical** – So that players may immediately use what they have learned.
- **Integrated** – Soccer-specific knowledge and general principles of coaching will be combined in a practical coaching environment.
- **Flexible** – To meet the range of needs of the players.
- **Holistic** – Focus on the whole person, not just the soccer components.
- **Ownership** – To create a highly skilled coach requires individuals to accept responsibility for owning, creating, maintaining and improving the environment in which they work and learn.
- **Continuous Improvement** – Highly skilled coaches must have an inherent thirst for knowledge. They look beyond the results and the outcome of the game to ensure that tomorrow's performance is better than today's. Every coaching situation is an opportunity to learn. Learning, therefore, never ends.

An OPDL coach must combine the most effective traditional methods of instruction with the most modern advances in learning. Therefore an OPDL coach should:

1. Use the traditional passive method of direct instruction but couple it with
2. Modern active methods like guided discovery and questioning

Active methods make the learner more accountable for his/her own learning and are shown to produce higher levels of understanding and retention of information.

Professional Development of OPDL coaches will happen through Ontario Soccer's Elite Coaching Development Program.

- The objective is to create a fraternity of coaches committed to excellence and continuous learning instead of the guarded and circumspect relations that typically exist between competitive coaches.
- Head coaches are expected to take part in the Regional Talent Centre programming.
- This will include conferences, workshops and/or courses held throughout the calendar year.
- The content will cover all aspects of coaching and be delivered by experts in the field.
- Match analysis statistics will be collected and reviewed with coaches during this program to show the progress of the teams towards up holding the technical standards herein.



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### 5.3 Club/Organization Development

For a Club seeking support and advice in developing their Club, the Ontario Soccer Club Development Department is available for guidance on a wide range of topics including:

- Volunteer Development
- Marketing your Club
- Financial Management
- Risk Management
- Community Development

### 5.4 Regional Talent Centre Program

Regional Training Centres (RTC's) will now be known as Regional Talent Centres.

The aims of the RTC program are:

1. Create an holistic environment to assess the quality and potential of the current talent pool within the Region while identifying and tracking the development growth of potential Provincial players.
2. Raise the player awareness of their current strengths and areas of improvement required for future development by providing Rubrics feedback.
3. Create a practical and educational environment for OPDL coaches to enhance player development best practice coaching habits in training and games.
4. On specific designated weekends assess the RDC players across with inter-regional competition.

Ontario Soccer technical staff will:

1. Support LTPD transition in relation to the OPDL and talented pathway.
2. Monitor and Report on OPDL Standards.
3. Conduct Annual Licence Performance Review.
4. Scout & track players at the OPDL, Club and District Level for RTC's.
5. Conduct Performance Analysis of OPDL.
6. Manage, supervise and coordinate Regional Talent Centres.
7. Coach Education of OPDL Coaches within RTC's.

The location of these RTC's will be determined by the OPDL.

The majority of players selected to RTC's will come from the OPDL teams.

In regions where there are no OPDL license holders, Ontario Soccer will deliver player identification events with players identified being part of the Regional Talent Center Program closest to them.

36 players will be selected to each RTC.



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Players will be identified by each Ontario Soccer technical staff, with support and recommendation from OPDL Coaches.

There will be six RTC events per year – four training weekends and two competition weekends.

Ontario Soccer technical staff will serve as the lead coach for each training weekend while OPDL team head coaches will serve as the supporting coaching staff.

Competition weekends will take the form of inter-regional play.

Ontario Soccer technical staff will appoint a coaching staff for each male and female team from the existing OPDL head coaches for the competition weekends.



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## APPENDIX A – THE TRAINING TO TRAIN PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MATRIX

This information is adapted from the Canada Soccer's *Wellness to World Cup Volume 2*.

Long-Term Player Development is very much about holistic development. It uses a four-corner approach to ensure development encompasses technical/tactical, physical, psychological/mental and social. On the following pages are all the potential skills that fall under one of those four categories that a U13 OPDL player should be learning. Not every skill will be started or developed to the same level. A scale has been included in order to clarify to what level each skill should be trained. The scale includes the following:

- **Introduce** – Start the player's relationship to the skill with a proper introduction to its fundamentals.
- **Develop** – Once introduced, the skill must now be repeated continuously and correctly in order to make it reliable. While this will happen primarily in training, the skill should also feature in games.
- **Refine** – Now that basic development has occurred, players combine this skill with other skills and tactics in the game environment.
- **Perfect** - The player takes the skill and adapts it specifically to his/her individual needs. At this point, their execution of the skill may look different from another player's execution.
- **Maintain** – When skills are refined and perfected or when there is no longer a need to continually refine or perfect skills, players should then hold their skills at the status quo.





### Individual Offensive Technical-Tactical Skills (Ball Carrier)

Ball Mastery	Technical	Receiving/Controlling on ground and out of air with both left and right side of body. Sole, inside, outside, instep of foot. Thigh and chest.	Develop increased speed and improved decision making.
	Tactical	To move the ball away from the defender. To remove the pressure from the opponent. To gain space. To face the play.	Develop and refine speed between two actions; control and pass, or control and shoot. Fast and accurate decision making determines next play.
Progression with the Ball	Technical	Running with the ball and dribbling. Inside, outside, laces/toe of left and right feet. Shielding, changes of direction, fakes/feints.	Refine dribbling and running with the ball from different positions (functional roles).
	Tactical	To goal or away from pressure. To space, towards an opponent or a teammate. To gain space, to gain time, to beat an opponent, to protect the ball, to crossover.	Refine decision making while dribbling, running with the ball, and the player's next action (Sequencing). All work is based on the goal and the direction of the play. Refine decision making and the change of pace.
Transmission of the Ball	Technical	Passing	Refine passing skills and increase passing range to 35m at varied heights. Develop passing with the head. Passing is built form positional perspectives.
	Tactical		Develop combination plays. Develop use of back passes. Develop use of wing play. Focus is on decision making of ball carrier.
	Technical	Shooting	Refine shooting skills and increase distances. Shoot with variety of surfaces. Develop heading at goal. Produce shots from different positions on the field.
	Tactical		Refine decision making in front of the goal. Decision making involves applying right technique with understanding the location/area in front of goal. Increase understanding of playing and then moving to follow shots.

Individual and Collective Offensive Technical and Tactical Skills – Creating Imbalances				
Wing Play	Mobility of players without the ball	Penetrating runs vertical. Penetrating runs diagonal.	Develop wing play by the use of a wide player running to wing or inside towards the goal.	
		Creating space	Introduce the concept of creating space for self.	
	Mobility of players with the ball.	Penetrating runs vertical	Develop wing plays by encouraging the players to take the ball down the flank with running and dribbling actions.	
		Ball movement	Give and go on the wing	Introduce
		Switch play using diagonal ball	Introduce	
		Crosses	Develop crosses on the ground and in the air. Introduce decision making for available options.	
		Set plays	Develop set plays	
	Change of rhythm		Develop	
	Central Play	Mobility	Creating space for self	Develop
			Creating space for teammate	Introduce
Penetrating runs			Introduce	
Numerical advantages			Introduce	
Link up play between strikers			Develop	
Support movements in front and behind defenders			Develop	
Ball Movement		Alternating direct and indirect play	Develop	
		Limiting number of passes	Develop	
		Penetrating pass into space	Refine	
		Penetrating pass to player's feet	Develop	
		Link up play between lines	Introduce	
		Switch play after opponent has committed positionally	Develop	
		Set plays	Develop	
Change of rhythm			Develop	
Counter Attack		With and without the ball	Furthest players get into space	Introduce
	Play deep on ball recovery		Introduce	
	Vertical play is maintained		Introduce	
	Finishing with reduced numbers		Introduce	



<b>Individual and Collective Offensive Technical-Tactical Skills - Finishing</b>		
Mobility	Escaping from rigorous marking, infiltrating runs	Introduce
	Framing the goal on crosses (Far post, near post, penalty spot)	Develop concept of near post and far post runs and introduce the penalty spot run.
Ball Movement	Running with the ball and dribbling (infiltration with the ball)	Develop the sequence of dribbling and shooting, including different options to beat the goalkeeper.
	Last pass (leading to a finishing action)	Develop
	Finishing actions: On the ground or in the air Shot inside the box Shot outside the box	Develop the technique of shooting on bigger goals with proper technical skills and decision making. Develop choice and accuracy of the shots. Develop shooting from outside the penalty area.
	Set plays	Develop

<b>Individual Defensive Technical-Tactical Skills</b>		
Defending Against Ball Carrier	Duel when opponent receives the ball. Delay when facing the opponent and jockey or challenge. Tackling from the front, side and back. Blocking and clearing with the foot or head. Making a defensive run alongside or from behind the opponent.	Develop defending skills: 1v1 jockeying and understanding when to delay and when to challenge. Develop challenging the ball carrier from different angles to regain possession. Introduce ball recovery with body position between ball and opponent. Introduce defensive headers and when and how to clear the ball.
Defending a Trajectory	Close to the ball carrier or away from the ball carrier. Cover space, mark an individual or intercept a ball via a pass, cross or throw.	Refine understanding of tasks – split vision between ball and opponent. Develop decision making process for when and how to intercept the ball.



<b>Individual and Collective Offensive Technical-Tactical Skills – Constructive Build-Up</b>	
Field occupation (Playing systems)	Introduce player to different playing systems, starting with 1-4-3-3 for a logical occupation of the field. Move to other playing systems such as 4-4-2 and later 4-2-3-1 for more complex understanding of field occupation. Refine dispersal – use of width and depth – to maximize field occupation.
Mobility	All players are mobile on and off the ball while maintaining good balance in the overall team shape. Speed of play is developing. Combination plays are integrated and players refine the coordination of their movements while maintaining a shape. Players are introduced to positional (functional) play. Develop wing and central plays. Introduce players to overlapping and penetrating runs to increase the number of players in forward positions.
Ball Movement	Develop accuracy of ball transfer through simple combination plays. Develop speed of play through varying the rhythm of ball movement; playing lateral vs forward; switching of play on the ground combined with a shorter diagonal ball in the air. Develop decision making of the pass like playing ball to feet of static player, to feet of running player or to space in front of running player. Develop transfer between lines with keeper having ability to play second and line and defenders the ability to play third line on the ground and in the air.
From the goalkeeper	Refine
In the offensive half	Develop
In the defensive half	Develop
After regain from the 1 <sup>st</sup> line	Introduce
After regain from the 2 <sup>nd</sup> line	Introduce
After regain from the 3 <sup>rd</sup> line	Introduce

<b>Individual and Collective Defensive Technical-Tactical Skills – Defending Against the Build-Up</b>	
Team Block	Develop the tactic of the player defending against the ball carrier and the first cover.
Mobility	When the ball is in front of the defensive lines, introduce the off-sides trap. Players learn to position to not concede depth between the defenders and to give the goalkeeper space to come into the action as the last player. When the ball is between lines, introduce proper recovery runs and double teaming.
Goalkeeper	Introduce the keeper providing good support to the defensive block.



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**Individual and Collective Defensive Technical-Tactical Skills – Defending Against the Counter Attack**

Player Positioning	Introduce concept of defensive players anticipating the counter while team is still on attack. If counter is played, introduce recovery and repositioning to regain balance.
Ball Movement	Introduce how to pressurize to prevent counter attack.

**Individual and Collective Defensive Technical-Tactical Skills – In and Around the Penalty Area**

Mobility	Field occupation in penalty area (1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> cover).	Develop players' understanding of space in front of the goal to be covered.
	Close covering and split vision.	Refine individual marking close to goal. Understand shifting vision between player and the ball.
Ball Carrier	Prevent ball played deep.	Against trajectory, develop good understanding of good cover both close to and away from the ball carrier.
	Prevent a cross.	Develop ways of preventing a cross individually and collectively
	Prevent scoring opportunities.	Refine pressuring any opponent in a position to shoot (by tackling, blocking or reducing options).
Defending set plays.		

**Individual Technical-Tactical Skills - Goalkeeping**

Positioning and Repositioning

Body Stance	Angle No immediate pressure, indirect danger, danger to goal	GK refine positioning (angle and stance) according to the position of the ball and the degree of danger to goal.
Mobility	Forward, lateral, backward Changing direction or shuffle and cross feet	Footwork is refined. More complex types of runs (cross feet backwards) are developed.

Shot Stopping (direct danger from a shot)

Body Action	Standing, diving, collapsing, jumping, reflexes	Refine jump, roll, and fall. GK develops side diving and other types of dives (forward, aerial, power, high)
Ball Trajectory	Ground, waist, chest, aerial, after rebound	GK refines ball handling from different trajectories and distances while standing, jumping, collapsing and diving. Catching is developed on shots.

		Deflecting is developed.
Technical Action	Handling, punching, deflecting, breakaways, tackling/diving at feet	Refine tackling/diving at feet and the approach to breakaways.
Preventing Scoring Opportunities (indirect danger)		
	Sweeper-keeper, deep ball, ball on the head of the defenders, aerial duel 1v1, crosses Supported by good positioning and communication with defenders	Develop reading of the space behind the defenders. Sweeper-keeper task refined. Develop two-handed/one-handed punching of crossed balls and duel situations.
Distribution Following Ball Recovery and Back Passes		
Body Part	Hand or feet/head	GK continues to develop overarm, sidearm and javelin throw; rolling the ball is refined.  Refine punting; drop kicks further developed.  Introduce side volley technique.  GK develops managing moving passes
Throw Action	Rolling, overarm, javelin, sidearm, underarm	
Kick Action	Punt, drop kick, fly side volley, moving pass	
Ball Trajectory	Aerial, mid-height, ground	Distance of the throw is increased and opens up all possibilities. Good decision making is refined.
Type	Driven, bent, sidewinder, straight	
Mental	Concentration, confidence, motivation, determination, courage/nerves	GK is exposed to specific training to support determination, confidence and concentration. Motivation should be increased. Courage comes from competency.

<b>Individual and Collective Technical-Tactical Skills - Goalkeeping</b>		
Defensive	Coaches Management	Some specialization, but GKs should only play one half in goal; other half should be as a field player
	Observation Reading the Game	
	Teammates, opponents, ball	The GK is able to see the ball and the opponent who is in a position to create danger in front of the goal.
	Communication	

	Organize, lead, inform During a stoppage or in the run of play Verbal: tone, volume, key words Non-verbal: arm, hand	Develop communication and start adding words based on situation around the penalty area and more observation of the opponent. Introduce role of GK as captain at the back.
	Set Pieces (Decision Making)	
	Corner from the right side or left side Free kick from the left flank, right flank or central Penalty kick	Develop and refine the role of the GK on corners and free kicks, understanding the different tasks and associated communication.
Offensive	Decision Making – Tempo	GK develops decision making, re: build-up and counter attack, and use proper technique based on decisions. Introduce and develop understanding of correct selection of pass for a quick attack.
	In the run of play: counter attack, quick attack, build-up On set pieces: goal kick	Refine technique for goal kicks. Develop different tactical options based on added distance. Work on near post situations.

<b>Physical Capacities</b>	
Objectives	Emphasize aerobic development at onset of the growth spurt (major fitness development phase)
Agility, Balance, Coordination (ABC's) and CNS Speed	Advanced soccer-specific drills
Stamina (endurance)	Major fitness development phase. Emphasize aerobic development at onset of the growth spurt.
Strength	Monitor onset, peak and deceleration of the growth spurt to determine window of trainability for strength (12-18 months after PHV for males, and either onset of PWV or menarche for females). Introduce resistance training exercises. Focus on functional strength.
Speed	Males 2 <sup>nd</sup> window of speed trainability (up to age 16) Prioritize speed and decrease movement time by applying correct running and movement technique and with different training methods (e.g., external resistance, incline/overspeed training etc.)
Suppleness	Important to continue flexibility and mobility as players go through growth spurt. Structured flexibility and mobility exercises should be integrated into practice.

Sustenance	Monitor diet to ensure balanced nutrition for performance and recovery. Ensure adequate hydration with increased activity.
Sleep	Maintain sleep habits. 2+ hours of sleep prior to midnight. Average 8 hours of sleep per night.
Other Physical Considerations	
Growth and Development	Be wary of the danger of overuse injuries and growth plate damage during different stages of growth and maturation. Any significant injuries should be referred to a medical practitioner. Refer to FIFA's 11+ ( <a href="http://f-marc.com/11plus/home/">http://f-marc.com/11plus/home/</a> ) for a complete injury prevention program
Posture and Function	Comprehensive assessment and professional referral for remediation. Continue throughout all stages.
Body Structure	Critical to monitor growth every 3 months and make adjustments to player training based on rate or tempo of growth. Growth plates may be more susceptible to injury during the growth spurt.
Other Sports	Encourage involvement in complementary sports that develop similar skills, fitness, and decision making.

<b>Mental Skills</b>	
General	Develop relaxation exercises (deep breathing)
	Develop self-talk and verbal cues
	Develop concentration exercises
	Continue positive reinforcement
	Develop mental preparation
	Introduce managing distractions
	Develop detailed use of goal setting
	Set process and outcome goals
Training and Competition	Develop imagery
	Develop refocusing skills
	Develop use of basic activation and relaxation exercises
	Individual Performance State – Develop understanding of mental training aspects for each individual player

### Emotional Skills

General Characteristics	Players have the capacity to fully comprehend the philosophy and rules of the game, as well as more complicated collective play. Concise, well-defined terminology can be an effective teaching tool.
Emotional	Make good use of assistant coaches and support staff in helping to improve player self-esteem and peer acceptance. Provide opportunities for participants to observe and meet role models.
Psychosocial	Motivate players to work independently on off-season training programs. Use team captains to advantage.

### Lifestyle

#### Sports and Activity Lifestyle

Focusing on fewer sports and using complementary sports for cross training

Introduce awareness of PHV and windows of trainability

Develop hydration and nutrition, and introduce concepts of recovery and regeneration; introduce peaking and tapering

Introduce players to training diaries

Develop cultural and lifestyle habits

Develop parental education and involve them in player lifestyle management

#### Personal Life Skills

Develop interpersonal skills and teamwork

Develop self-discipline in training and personal behaviour

Introduce individual management and career planning

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