

FAST TRACKING & PLAYER DEVELOPMENT U9 - U11



Having children compete and practice in the correct environment is instrumental in their development as young people and as soccer players. The elements that have to be considered in that environment are Social/Emotional, Psychological, Physical and Technical.



Ensuring that children are appropriately challenged in each of the four areas identified above is crucial to their enjoyment and progression in the game. The challenge that Clubs, Technical Directors, Coaches and Administrators have is making sure that each and every child is in the correct environment based on their needs and abilities in all four corners of development. To add to the challenge, children develop at differing rates and times; this puts an added burden on organizations to do the correct thing on this crucially important aspect of a child's holistic development.

This resource has been created by Ontario Soccer for Clubs, Academies, Coaches, parents and players. The information contained in this resource will help all parties involved in Ontario grassroots soccer to make educated decisions when considering the age/stage that a young player should train and compete at.

What is wrong with a player dominating at their own age group? Why can't we challenge the player and their skill set without putting them in a new environment that may not be socially as good for their development first and foremost, let alone then considering the physical, technical and tactical implications.

Rob Gale—Canada U-20 Head Coach

When the conditions are right, taking part in sport can support the development of the whole person; when they are not, it can lead to higher dropout rates and negative behaviours.



Reasons to CONSIDER competing with older children



Intellectually Gifted

If the children his/her same age may not provide the mental stimulation she/he needs to be satisfied with the interaction.



Technically advanced

Children who have been involved in the sport from an early age may show signs of advanced technical ability. Technically they may be more appropriately challenged by playing with older children.



Emotionally and Socially Advanced

Children with a high social intelligence are able to manage complex interactions well. A socially mature child will be well accepted by older children and may enjoy activities that are typically associated with older children.



Physically/Athletically Developed

Children who have advanced physicality may be able to compete with older children who have similar physical attributes. This includes being developed in the areas of speed, agility, balance and coordination.



It's important to remember that children must have advanced qualities in all areas mentioned above to feel comfortable and successful in the new environment with older children. Simply being skilled in one or two areas and then being placed in an inappropriately challenging environment will not lead to further social, psychological or technical development for the child.

IN THE CORRECT ENVIRON- MENT?






Children in the wrong environment will not have as much fun, be less successful, not develop as well and ultimately may quit the sport altogether. Therefore, it is vital that the assessment and evaluation of young people is treated with the importance it deserves as the consequences can be severe .

There are times when children should practice and compete with and against older children. The assessment of the children's abilities to be successful and continue to develop should be treated very seriously and continually monitored.

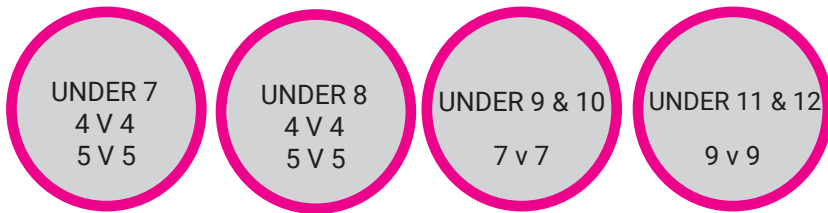


"You don't coach soccer. You coach Elizabeth that wants to play soccer. I'm sure you know soccer well, but do you know Elizabeth well?"

Reasons NOT to compete with older children

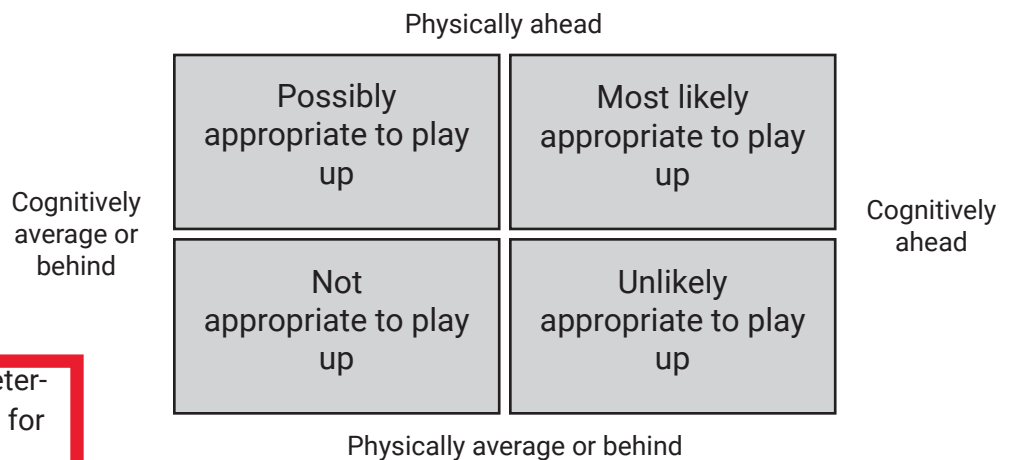
-  **Parental pressure on the organization/coach to play their child up.** Parents or guardians putting pressure on coaches/clubs to play the child at an older age group as they believe increased competition will aid development. Clubs will allow this to happen in fear of losing a registration fee.
-  **Avoiding small sided soccer to get to the “real” adult game quicker.** The inaccurate thinking that small sided soccer is of no benefit and the quicker a child plays 11v11 the better they will become.
-  **Organizations/coaches using it as a carrot to recruit players.** In a drive to increase club registration enticing players by offering to play them at older age groups. The unknowing parent believes this is a good situation for their child.
-  **To stroke a parents ego, that their child is “special”.** By having their child play with older players inflates the parents ego as they believe they have a special child.
-  **To accelerate the development process.** By fast tracking through the development stages, the parents incorrectly think that the child will become a better player quicker. Soccer is a late specialization sport and there is no way to fast track. Many years must be spent practicing and playing within the correct development stages.

FORMATS OF PLAY



The formats of play as shown here have been designed to allow for maximum Technical, Physical, Social and Psychological development of the young players during competition. If a player was to pass

on a format of play they could be missing out on an important phase of their individual development. The varied benefits of small sided games are well documented.



Use this matrix to help you determine whether or not it is best for your child to play up

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PARENTS AND THE COACH

Playing with older players can put additional physical stress on the young player. The game is quicker and more physical than they are accustomed to and the young player has to physically do more to be a part of the new team.

The psychological stress put on the young player as he or she strives to “keep up” with the older players, who may be more accomplished as the group they just left, can be mentally taxing for them.

The player, who has been moved up to play with older players, loses the status they once had. In the original team he/she would have been the team leader, the “go to” guy, would have been successful and got lots of play time. In the older team they will likely become just one of the players and lose the status that they once had. This can negatively affect the child’s confidence, self-esteem and enjoyment.

A child, who misses on a format of play designed specifically for that developmental stage, will forgo the opportunity to develop technically and tactically from experiences that are more frequent in the smaller game format. For example a u8 player who plays at u9 will miss playing at 5v5 and jump directly to 7v7. The added physical challenge, due to the increased field size along with the added cognitive challenge, means more decisions are to be made. This may be too much for the child to successfully handle and add to their stress and frustration.

PROCESS

If a Coach or Technical Director identifies a grassroots player who he/she feels has advanced skills and qualities, and thinks they should be considered to play with an older age group, the following must take place.

- A discussion with the team coach to establish a history on the player and a consistency in their performance and behaviour. If this discussion proves to be positive and an agreement is made that the young player should be considered to play with an older age group, then;
 - A discussion with the player and his or her parents or guardian takes place. This formal discussion should inform the player and parents/guardian of the information that is contained within this document and the challenges that the young player may face when playing with older players.
 - It’s important that no pressure is put on the young player to play with the older group. The player must be allowed to stay with their own age group if that is their choice
 - The evaluation process as laid out in the evaluation forms must be followed.
 - Signatures from Technical Director, parents, player and district association must be on the form.
- District associations are to keep copies of all evaluation forms.



Interesting Fact

Average age of male World Cup winners is 27 years.
Female World Cup winners, average age is 26 years.



Fast Tracking/Player evaluation form for u9 and u11 players wishing to play at an older age group

This evaluation form has been designed to help Technical Directors or Club Head Coaches make decisions on players who wish to play at an older age group. **Please be aware this evaluation is only valid for one (1) playing season.**

Identification Key: 1 = Below Average. 2 = Average. 3 = Good. 4 = Excels

The individual player must regularly demonstrate the ability to Excel in ALL 4 sections

Revision Date: February 19th, 2016

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Player's Name | |
| Player's Date of Birth | |
| Player's Club | |
| District Association | |
| Technical Director/Club Head Coach | |

| Psychological/ Mental | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self Confidence | Safe and positive environment | Player is willing to express themselves. Not afraid to make mistakes | | | | |
| Competitiveness | Displaying desire to be successful | Player displays the desire to be successful in practice activities and small-sided games | | | | |
| Concentration | An ability to stay on task | Player shows a good attention span and has the ability to stay on task for longer periods | | | | |
| Commitment | Apply themselves at practice and completing activities | Player is happily attending the majority of practices and games. Shows ability to complete activities and exercises during practice | | | | |
| Self-Control | In control of emotions | While in stressful situations, player shows they can control their emotions | | | | |
| Determination | Displays a determination to complete tasks | Does to not give up easily, displays a determination to complete tasks | | | | |
| Enjoyment | Shows a Love for the game | The player shows an enjoyment and love for the game of soccer | | | | |

| Physical | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agility | Moving in quick controlled, movements | Jumping, hopping, skipping, twisting bounding | | | | |
| Balance | Right and left foot | Demonstrate balance in a variety of positions, one foot, crouched, on toes, etc. | | | | |
| Coordination | In small-sided games | Shows ability to twist and turn, change direction keeping movements with body under control | | | | |
| Stamina | In small-sided games | Shows endurance and stamina in small sided game situations | | | | |
| Strength | In 1v1 and small sided games | Shows strength on the ball and to not get physically pushed off the ball | | | | |
| Speed | Multi directional | Player can move at speed in different directions with and without the ball | | | | |
| Acceleration | In small sided games | Show a quick change of speed | | | | |
| Reaction | Activities and SSGs | Player is able to react to different situations at speed | | | | |

| Social/Emotional | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| Listening | Listen to instruction | Player shows ability to listen to details. | | | | |
| Cooperation | With coach and teammates | Player is able to cooperate at a basic level with other players and coaches | | | | |
| Communication | Verbal communication | Player is able to communicate with team mates and offer encouragement to others | | | | |
| Sharing | Sharing the ball and ideas | Player understands that passing can help them be successful | | | | |
| Problem-solving | Working out mistakes | Player displays a basic understanding of working through their mistakes and can correct them | | | | |
| Decision-making | Game decisions | Has the ability to work out simple game-related decisions. | | | | |
| Empathy | Assisting others in games | Assist's others with their problems in games and activities | | | | |
| Patience | Patience with themselves and others | Demonstrates patience with themselves and teammates as they work through mastering techniques and skills | | | | |
| Respect/Discipline | | Player shows respect for other players' equipment and space. | | | | |

| Technical | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dribbling the ball | Right foot and left foot under pressure | Player is now able to dribble at an opponent and can show a change of speed and direction with their head up | | | | |
| Shooting the ball | Right foot and left foot | Player is able to use both feet over short distances. Shots are accurate and on target | | | | |
| Running with the ball | Right foot and left Foot | Player can run with the ball using both feet in different directions and are able to vary their speed with head/eyes up | | | | |
| Turning with the ball | Right foot and left foot | Using both feet, the player is able to perform turns with the inside and outside of their feet with their head/eyes up | | | | |
| Receiving the ball | Right foot and left foot. Introduce thigh and chest | Player can control the ball with the inside and outside of both feet, their thigh and chest. | | | | |
| Passing the ball | Right and left foot | Player is able to play the ball over short distances using both feet | | | | |

For a player to excel they must accumulate a minimum of 80% in all areas, and cannot receive a below average score in any section.

Additional Comments by the Technical Director/Club Head Coach:

Recommendation/Decision for the player:

Next Assessment Date:

Signature of Club Technical Director/Club Head CoachDate.....

Name and Signature of ParentDate.....

Name and Signature of PlayerDate.....

Signature of District Technical Director/RepresentativeDate.....