



THE SUPPORTIVE PARENT

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD
TO ENJOY A BETTER
FOOTBALLING EXPERIENCE



Est. 1923



OUR AIM AT THE CDSFA

IS TO CREATE A BETTER FOOTBALLING EXPERIENCE FOR ALL

Better for everybody, not only for the players and coaches, we also want to include the parents, spectators, volunteers & referees. We do this by facilitating learning and enjoyment through participation, competition and observance. In the following pages we will give you an insight into what goes on within football, what our long-term intent is, and how you can assist your child and you, having the best experience possible.

WHAT TO EXPECT As we begin our football journey, we notice that just like in the local school playground, there is a significant variance in the physical and emotional development of children due to age, gender and maturity. This will mean there will be all types of children playing together. Our teams and clubs are based and run primarily by volunteers. They are conducted and controlled by parents who fill the roles of coach, administrator, committee member, board member or president. Generally speaking, these people will only be involved for a few years, given the demand of modern society, while their own children are participating. In reality 90% of volunteer-based youth sports are coached by parents with a child in the team.

What Could Make My Child Not Enjoy Football?

- Parents criticism and yelling on the sidelines.
- Not having sufficient game time.
- Everyone should share playing time.
- Emphasis on only winning, at all times.
- Half of the teams will lose, enjoy the journey.
- Poor communication between coaches, officials, players and parents.
- Fear of making mistakes, failing is the first stage in learning something new.
- Boring training sessions and poor coaching.
- Low team morale

THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT WE ARE WORKING HARD COLLECTIVELY TO REMOVE FROM THE GAME.

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OK, YOU HAVE SIGNED YOUR CHILD UP FOR FOOTBALL.

WHAT DO PARENTS NEED TO KNOW?

Now what do you do? The most important thing parents need to know is that football is about children enjoying themselves!

The simplified rules are: You try and score in a goal. You stop the opposition from scoring in your goal. The ball should be shared with your teammates, so everyone has opportunities to play with the ball. The ball must be kept away from your opponents.

**ALL PLAYERS MUST RESPECT EACH OTHER.
EVERYONE ENJOYS THEMSELVES BY PLAYING FOOTBALL!**



WHAT DO THE PLAYERS NEED?

HOW CAN YOU BE A SUPPORTIVE PARENT?

Players of all levels need supportive and enthusiastic players around them. Each player should have his or her own age appropriate ball. The CDSFA (at no charge) supplies 1000's of these balls each year to our clubs. Shin pads are mandatory to participate for safety and must be worn to training and the games. Football boots that match with the surface are needed. Outdoor games require boots with plastic moulded studs. A water bottle with the players name written on it and full of fresh water. Your child will be supplied with a playing shirt, shorts and socks from your club to play in.

Young children need to play football with no pressure imposed by parents. They are children and children make mistakes. Treat them like children and help them learn from their mistakes. Seeing adult role models in action ensures participation is fun. "I play because I love the game, not because maybe one day I may be a professional football player". Regardless of your child's degree of success or level of skill or lack thereof, you must encourage your child.

In the student athlete's life, encouraging participation in a cross section of sports and activities while placing education first, ensuring balance. Emphasise the enjoyment of development, of learning new skills, meeting new friends and al-

ways having fun. Leave the coaching to coaches and avoid placing too much pressure on your child and their performance. Always be positive and patient.

Remember children will always look to the sideline for recognition. Respond by smiling, giving the thumbs up, and acting responsibly. Encourage the entire team not just your child. YOU are their role model.

Children like to be encouraged and there is no better way to show this than to support their efforts. Whether they have had success during the game or not, regardless of their level of skill, support your child. Teach your child the importance of respect, for coaches, officials and players through interactive discussions with them. Let them know of the critical nature of contributing to the team and its overall success.

Again, leave the coaching to the coach and do not criticise them, even privately with your child, as it undermines their relationship with your child. Leave the officiating to the referees or game leaders and do not criticise them. Avoid adding pressure on children regarding performance, let them know that you enjoy watching them play.

**A CHILD NEEDS BASIC EMOTIONAL
SUPPORT IN ORGANISED SPORT.**

MINI ROOS

SMALL SIDED GAMES, ALL PART OF GRASS ROOTS FOOTBALL.

The Canterbury & District Soccer Football Association (CDSFA) strives to provide a healthy and active life- style through its grassroots programs. Grass-roots or Community Football is what we call the first area of introduction to the game, it's where we all start playing and contributing in our local community through small sided games. The aim of the CDSFA is to increase participation levels by retaining players and advancing players into 11-a-side football via our MiniRoos.

The grassroots program for small sided games, is called MiniRoos, and it focuses on football in a non-league table, although still competitive environment. Every child is guaranteed playing time and the game is taught while players develop in an enjoyable atmosphere. We want the players to be competitive in as much as to try their best to score and defend, but not at the expense of how they play and learn the game.

For our new and developing players, it is very much an individual work in progress as we continue through the age groups. The year you turn a particular age, ie 9, no matter when in that year, defines you as an U9 for that particular year, etc.

In the CDSFA, MiniRoos is up to and including Under 11 as the Under 12 age group move into 11-a-side football, while some associations wait till U13 before moving to a full sized pitch.



WHY DO WE HAVE SMALL SIDED GAMES?

MORE TOUCHES, MORE TIME WITH THE BALL, REPETITION IS BETTER.

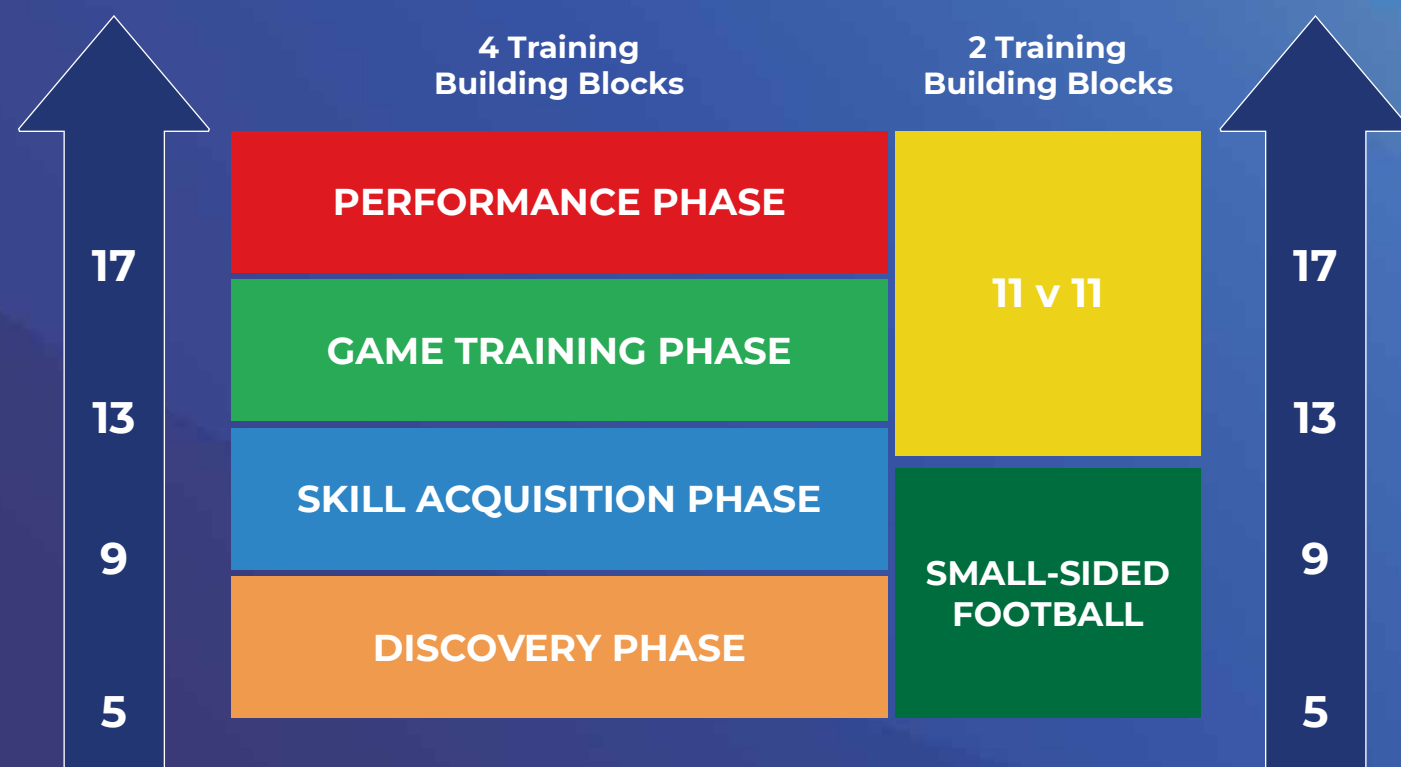
These early and informative years of learning is where we utilise repetition of football specific situations, with each session focussing on a particular aspect or what we refer to as the Four Core Skills, we will look at these in detail in a later section. Small sided games mean that the players have more touches on the ball and as such have more practice situations within the games. The players must always be playing football by 'perceiving-deciding-executing', and the relevance to the long term objective of 11 side football, must always be apparent, it is assisting them with making their own game-based decisions.

The coach makes this happen by designing training exercises with a specific purpose in mind. Using game-specific resistances, by manipulating things such as the number of opponents, team- mates, size and position of the goals/targets, the size and shape of the area to work in, and so on. Small sided games are designed and developed to create and provide guidance for children playing the game of football. It is to supply the footballing knowledge that will allow the players to develop without placing unnecessary limitations on them, in an environment where it feels safe to attempt new things.

The Small Sided Game is designed to engineer player development with frequent contact with the ball and familiarise the children with the different challenges they will experience as they progress to the larger game format. It progresses in deliberate stages to eventually create an understanding of 11-a-side football in conjunction with the football curriculum delivered by the coach.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS

SMALL SIDED GAMES, ALL PART OF GRASS ROOTS FOOTBALL.



Our Football Curriculum distinguishes 6 Building Blocks: 4 Training Building Blocks and 2 playing Building Blocks.

The Football Building Blocks Methodology is the framework that provides practical guidelines for coaches working at all levels of youth development.

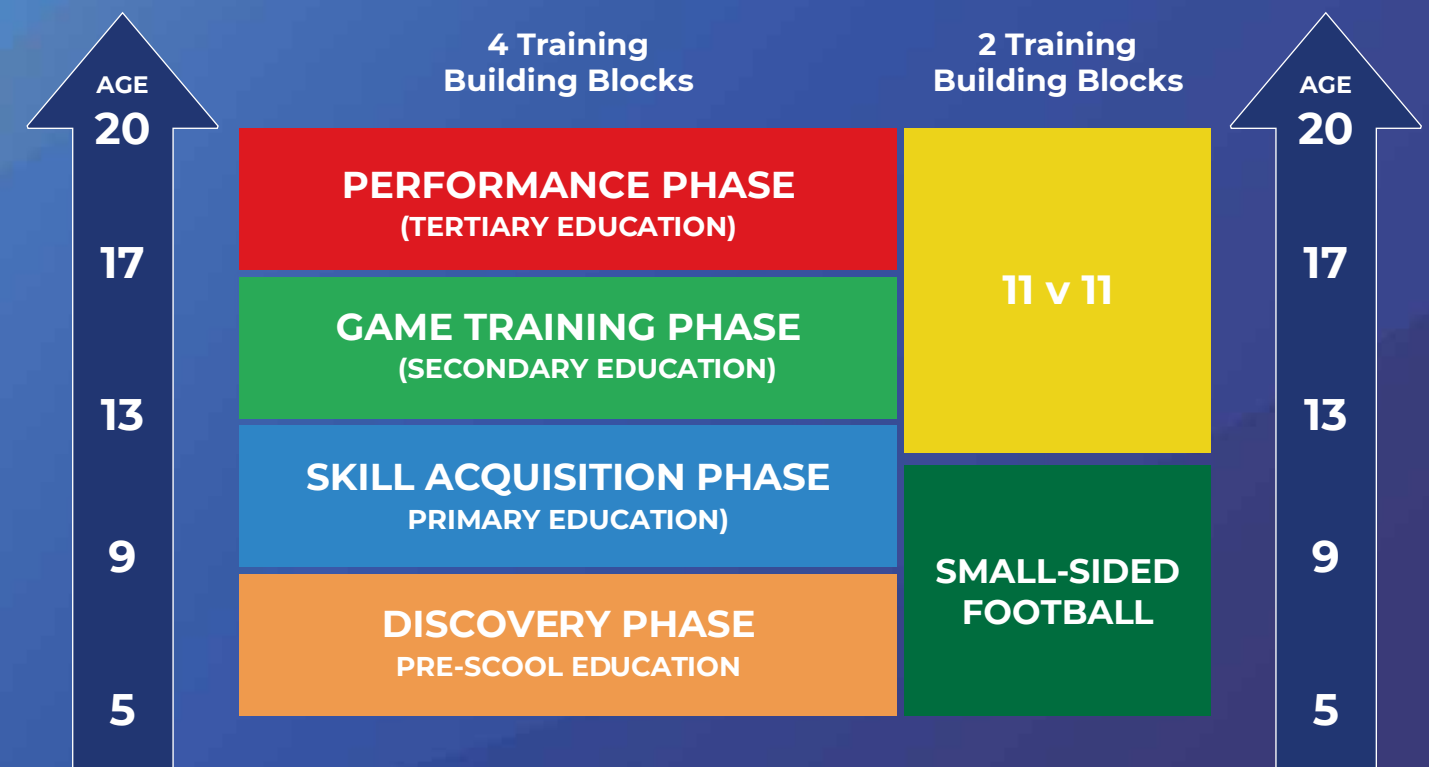
This framework is fundamentally the same in most football associations around the world and for that matter most sports, where they value development within their youth system.

Key aims of this are:

- 1) Develop technically proficient players
- 2) Develop tactically aware, proactive players
- 3) To develop and continually improve youth football in Australia based upon a successful style of technique and creativity.

To instil a lifelong passion and love for football in young players. The result of this approach must be future generations of players with the skills and habits to continue to improve men's and women's football.

USING THEM WITH A SCHOOL ANALOGY



It is a lengthy learning process developing in stages, just like in school. We build upon the information in stages so that we don't overwhelm them with too much all at once or nothing will be learnt. This process of learning and developing manifests over years, we need to be patient and conscientious of staying focused.

We are creating in our players football habits, rather than skills & tricks, so that later when we need to apply these learnt habitual skills, we can do them in a quick tactical fashion.

AS IN SCHOOL, WE DON'T RUSH TO EDUCATE ALL THE INFORMATION AT ONCE.

WE TAKE OUR TIME AND BUILD UPON LAYERS TO ENSURE LEARNING TAKES PLACE.

DISCOVERY PHASE

In the Discovery Phase (Ages 4-8yrs) we want the players to love the game and want to be part of it and in turn they will learn and prepare themselves for the Skill Acquisition Phase. In this first stage, let them play a lot of varied fun football related games! What was (and still is) the best possible way to develop a basic skill level, understanding and passion for football is to play every free minute of the day.

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 too much at this age.

The first and most important step when 'coaching' in this phase, with the youngest children, is to take the word 'coach' out of your mind. Your most important job is to be an organiser of fun football-related practices and. let them play!

This could also be the first group interactions with other adults and children and can introduce sharing concepts and new social skills. This approach, where they can discover' how the game works in a natural way, is the right one for the Discovery Phase, there is no rush to create the next 'World's Greatest'

Characteristics of Children this age

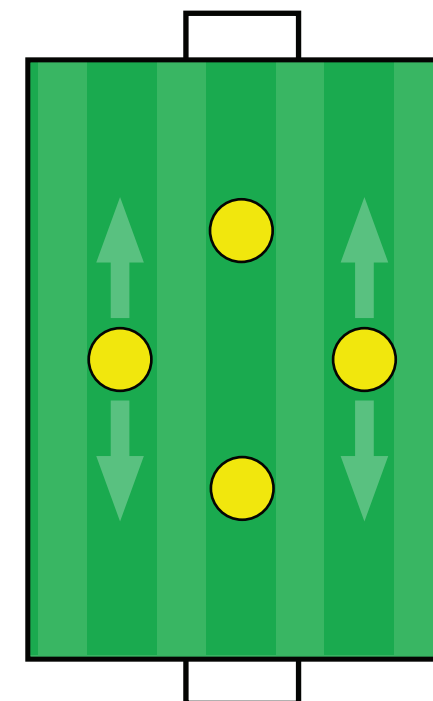
They are still 'clumsy' (lack fine motor skills), because they are still developing their coordination. They have a short span of attention and are quickly and easily distracted, which poses its own coaching dilemmas, so have a few activities for them to 'reset' like in a video game, so as to regain their attention for the task or activity.

They are 'self-centred' and not yet able to really work together, they have trust and sharing issues that makes them chase the ball and bunch up, as they don't believe that the ball will be returned to them, so they all go and chase the ball. They play or participate for fun with short bursts of energy and enthusiasm. They are also unable to handle a lot of information (instructions, feedback) be patient, and don't be discouraged with slow progress, as they are children, not small adults.



UNDER 6 - UNDER 7 (4-A-SIDE)

FORMATION - DIAMOND



COACHING GUIDE

No 'coaching' only encouragement, reminding and praising. In 4 v 4 football, the 'coach' should not worry about 'tactics' other than encouraging the kids to try and score when they have the ball and win it back when the other team has the ball in order to prevent them from scoring. Aim for equal playing time. Simple reminders to the players/team of shape and tasks.

Emphasis on fun and building a love of the game. Natural' development through just playing and discovering one's possibilities through trial & error. The best coach is not the one who shouts instructions the whole game, just let them play with gentle relaxed reminders. They need to discover and think for themselves. Discourage hanging in the goals for either attackers or defenders (No goalkeepers).

4-a-side with no goalkeeper.
Maximum of three substitutes
(Less substitutes equal more game time).
20 min halves.
Minimum - 5 min half-time break.

Field size: 30m x 20m (eighth of a field).
Goal size: 1.5m wide x 90cm high (guide)
portable goals.
Ball size: 3.
No throw ins.
No corner kicks.
No offside.
No match result or table.

Suggested no more than 6 Players or squad

of 10-12 and have two teams.
Rotate your players in all positions

Positioning & Shape:
Create a diamond shape and have a forward up front and a defender at the rear.

The wingers left and right attack when our team has possession and defend when the other team has the ball.

SKILL ACQUISITION PHASE

SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNICAL HABITS.

In the Skill Acquisition Phase (Ages 8-13yrs) the coach must focus exclusively on providing a solid foundation of technical skill, the Four Core Skills, these feature prominently in this developmental phase. If the player does not gain this skill foundation during this period, it will be difficult to make it up later. No amount of fitness or competitive spirit will ever compensate for deficiencies in functional core game skills.

The emphasis in the Skill Acquisition Phase is on individual and selfish Skill Development, but this should not be separated from developing insight and game understanding at the same time. If this approach is applied properly, it will provide a seamless transition into the Game Training, or 11 a side, Phase. To some extent the Skill acquisition process is ongoing even inserting itself within the next phases of learning.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN THIS AGE

SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNICAL HABITS.

They are highly motivated, enthusiastic, competitive, and like challenges, they want to show they're the best to the coach and others. They are very adaptive to learning motor skills. They are physically and mentally ready for a more structured approach to training, although still self-centred, they start to learn how to work together. They are sensitive to criticism and failure; praise is important and well received.

In the Skill Acquisition Phase, the period before entering the growth spurt that goes hand in hand

with puberty, children are well balanced and co-ordinated. This makes them very adaptive to developing motor skills (techniques), especially since this is one of the brain's critical development periods.

This is mostly describing boys, as girls enter puberty with growth spurts slightly earlier and we need to be aware of the differences. You may have in these age groups mixed teams of girls and boys which is a good thing, but you do need to be aware of these ongoing physical changes.



Technical skills must be developed now.

If we miss out during these early developmental years, it will hamper the child for the rest of the player's playing life. Hopefully it now makes perfect sense why we call this phase the 'Skill Acquisition Phase'. The focus during this period is on the development of the 'functional game skills. These are the technical skills you need to perform effectively during a game. The word 'functional' emphasises the difference between 'unfunctional' tricks, which may be fun to see and do but useless during the game unless utilised at the correct time. This gives the player many more choices in a game, as they have the ability to do more things, i.e. if I can only use my left inside foot, that limits my choice of what I can do on the field.



THE FOUR CORE SKILLS

THE SKILL ACQUISITION TRAINING PROGRAM FOCUSES ON DEVELOPING SKILLS OR HABITS WHEN IN POSSESSION OF THE BALL.

FIRST TOUCH - obtaining control of the ball.

RUNNING WITH THE BALL - including close control dribbling and running with the ball into open areas.

ONE v ONE- taking it past players while controlling the ball, this also includes 2v2 and so on, introducing defensive aspects.

STRIKING THE BALL - encompassing all parts of the body including feet and head (passing and shooting).

These Four Core Skills cover primarily all of the actions of any outfield player when in possession of the ball during a game of football. The Four Core Skills become the bedrock of your technical requirements as a player and without being competent in these, you are at a footballing disadvantage, and hence why there is so much importance placed on the Four Core Skills above all else.

When the children 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 should 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.

The 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', and other tactical aspects).

UNDER 8 - UNDER 9 (7-A-SIDE)

FORMATION - 1 : 3 : 3



COACHING GUIDE:

Start by working on a basic organisation (1 in goal, 3 at the back, 3 up front, this is a progression of the diamond shape, with now our 3 attackers and defenders more fixed) and a basic understanding of some team tasks (e.g. how to defend and attack as a team). The coach should still let every player play in every position regularly. One week they want to be the Goalkeeper, next time the centre forward etc. The coach should not be too concerned with 'tactics'. The focus in training is on the individual player, so they then apply their skills in the weekend game.

Aim for equal playing time. Give basic tasks for players such as "when our Goalkeeper has the ball, can the defenders spread out wide to receive the ball facing forward?" At half time, reinforce the team task and what you would like to see more of or less of. Remember, be positive and ensure players are having fun!

7-a-side including a goalkeeper.
Maximum of four substitutes.
(Less substitutes equal more game time).

20 min halves minimum - 5 min half time break.

Field size:
Best: 45m long x 35m wide (quarter field).
Min: 40m long x 30m wide.
Max: 50m long x 40m wide.
Goal size: 3m wide x 2m high (guide).
Ball size: 3.
Throw ins.
Corner kicks.
Penalty area and penalty kicks.

No offside - discourage children from permanently standing in blatant offside positions.

Rotate your players in all positions throughout the season.

Results recorded though no table available.

(To enable the Association with grading of teams to have even competition throughout the season).

Suggested no more than 10 Players.

UNDER 10 - UNDER 11 (9-A-SIDE)

FORMATION - 1:3:2:3

COACHING GUIDE:

Start by working on a basic introduction of three lines of players (1 in goal, 3 at the back, 3 up front and 2 in midfield) again an extension of what the players where playing in 7 a side and a basic understanding of some team tasks (e.g.: how to defend and attack as a team). The coach should still let every player play in every position regularly. One week they want to be Goalkeeper, next time the centre forward etc.

The coach should not be too concerned with tactics. The focus in training is on the individual player, so they then apply their skills in the weekend game. Aim for equal playing time. If you have no goalkeeper take it in turns each week; play one half as keeper, then the rest of the game on the field.

Remember, be positive and ensure players are having fun!



9-a-side including a goalkeeper.
Maximum of five substitutes
(Less substitutes equal more game time).
25 min halves minimum - 5 min half time break.

Field size:
Best: 65m long x 45m wide (half field).
Min: 60m long x 40m wide.
Max: 70m long x 50m wide.
Goal size: 5m wide x 2m high (guide).
Ball size: 4.
No offside - strongly discourage children from permanently standing in blatant offside positions.
Throw ins.

Corner kicks.
Penalty area and Penalty kicks.

Rotate you players in all positions throughout the season.

Results recorded though no table available.

(To enable the Association with grading of teams to have even competition throughout the season).

Suggested no more than 12 Players.

GAME TRAINING PHASE

TACTICAL LEARNING IN AN ELEVEN-A-SIDE GAME

In the Game Training Phase, the focus shifts towards TACTICAL learning to play as a team in an eleven a side game. It is about developing an understanding of the team tasks during the main moments (attacking; defending; transition-ing), as well as the specific tasks that go with these playing principles.

Some examples of these would be, effective possession through a structured build up, creating scoring opportunities centrally or wide, Limit the opponent's ability to create goal scoring opportunities, Immediate transition into attacking positions etc.

To be able to properly develop these team tasks and the individual player tasks, we need the players to have reasonable technical ability and the context of a playing formation.

Even while coaching in Game Training you will also still be continuing to teach technical skills along with the new tactical components.

**THE PURPOSE OF THE SKILL
ACQUISITION PHASE IS TO
ACQUIRE THE TECHNICAL
CORE SKILLS, THE GAME
TRAINING PHASE (AGES
12YRS+) IS ABOUT LEARNING
HOW TO APPLY THEM IN A
FUNCTIONAL WAY.**



CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN THIS AGE

GAME TRAINING PHASE (AGES 12YRS+) 11-A-SIDE FOOTBALL

These players are in (or entering into) puberty, which is a phase of radical mental and physical change.

Significant changes in their 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. Physically with this onset of sudden growth, the centre of gravity changes for the player and they can be perceived as becoming uncoordinated or clumsy, "why can't I do things that I found easy to do before?", this can confuse the player and coach.

This will pass as they become accustomed to their new body. Again be patient and make them aware of what it is, so they don't become overly frustrated and it compounds with other new characteristics. These physical changes and sudden growth can also result in pain with accelerated bone growth. Be patient and listen to the players.

The main mental characteristics of the puberty phase are:

- Sudden mood changes.
- Impulsiveness (acting first, rather than thinking).
- Resistance against authority. Yes, that includes you, coaches and parents alike.
- Accelerated intellectual development, hence challenging authority.
- Identity search, which leads to a desire to be part of a group.
- Looking for peer approval.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THIS AGE BRACKET IS THE FACT THAT THESE PLAYERS ARE IN (OR ENTERING INTO) PUBERTY, WHICH IS A PHASE OF RADICAL MENTAL AND PHYSICAL CHANGE.

UNDER 12+ (11-A-SIDE)

FORMATION – 1 : 4 : 3 : 3

COACHING GUIDE:

Start by working on basic organisation (1 in goal, 4 at the back, 3 in midfield, and 3 up front) and a basic understanding of some team tasks (e.g. How to defend by controlled pressing as a team from the forward line. Play the ball on the ground from the back line through midfield to the forward line through controlled possession. Aggressively (at speed) attack the opposition goal. And head towards their goal at every opportunity. The #2 & #5 should as much as possible push forward up the wings to create an attacking overload.

Corners should be played primarily on the ground, played as quickly as possible as we should with any dead ball situation. Keep the ball in play and in our possession at all times, and not play it out (giving it away) with a clearance kick to nobody. The coach should be concerned with shape and tactical awareness, hence forming triangles with the players to create passing lanes. Give basic tasks for players such as "when the Goalkeeper has the ball, can the defenders spread out wide to receive the ball facing forward?"

Make the field as big as possible when in possession, which makes it more difficult for the opposition defenders, make the field as small as you can when the opposition have the ball. Do not commentate every pass in the game i.e. let the players play and decide what they should do on the field. The coach should instruct them before the game when they have their undivided attention, then simply remind during the game.



11 a side including a goalkeeper
Maximum of five substitutes.

Various times pending on specific age group i.e. Under 12s have 25min halves, Under 13-14 have 30 min halves and it continues to increase with adults having 45 min halves.

5 min and maximum 15 min half time break.
Field size: 90m long x 45m wide (min size) Ball size: 5.

WHY 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 FA (along with most other football countries) considers 1-4-3-3 the most appropriate formation to develop an understanding of team play in young players. Why? In the 1-4-3-3 formation there are 3 lines with a balanced spread of players over the pitch ('triangles' of players). As explained earlier, this is one of the basic conditions for successful

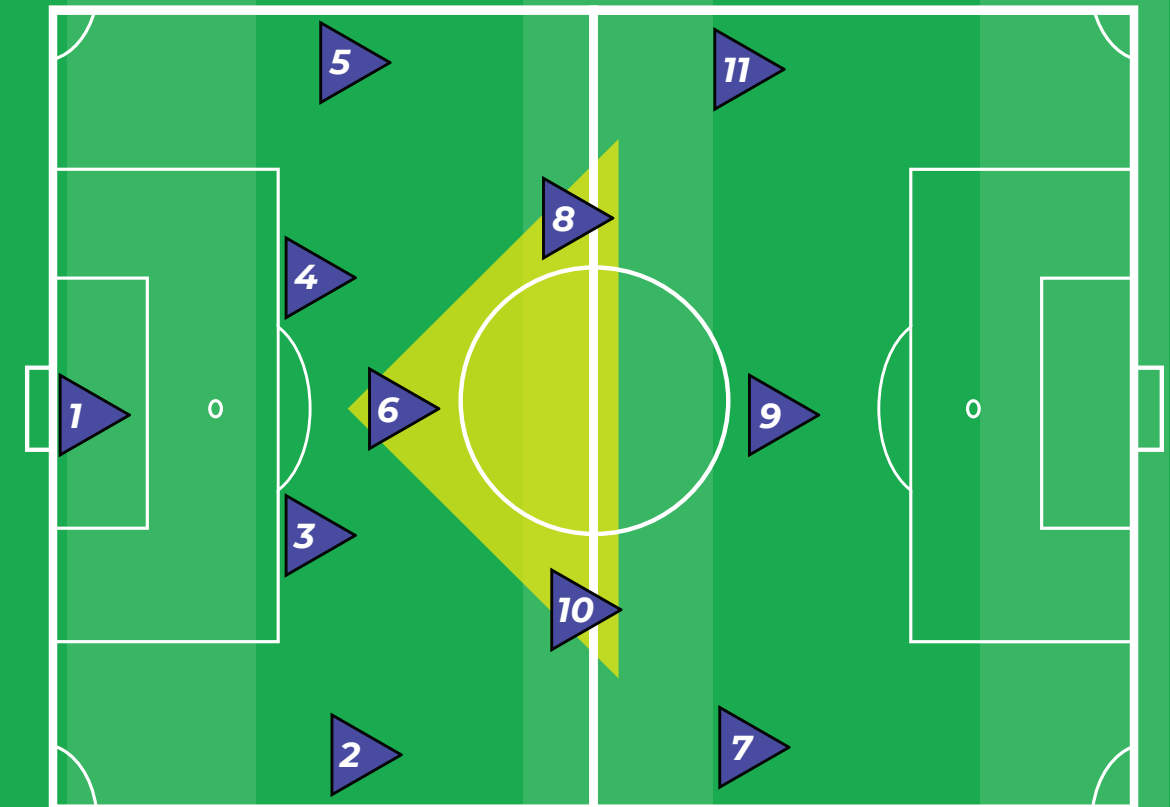
positioning play or to put it more simply: this creates a range of other, more 'logical' options for youth players. Instead of just kicking the ball forward, players almost 'automatically' start making combinations. The 1-4-3-3 formation stimulates the development of creative attacking players; more specifically the 3 attackers and the attacking midfielder(s).

Defensively 1-4-3-3 also has an advantage since pressuring an opponent's defensive line (proactive defending!) is easier to do with 3 attackers as it requires less running and is tactically less complicated. For youth players, the positions and the associated player tasks are logical, recognisable and easy to comprehend.

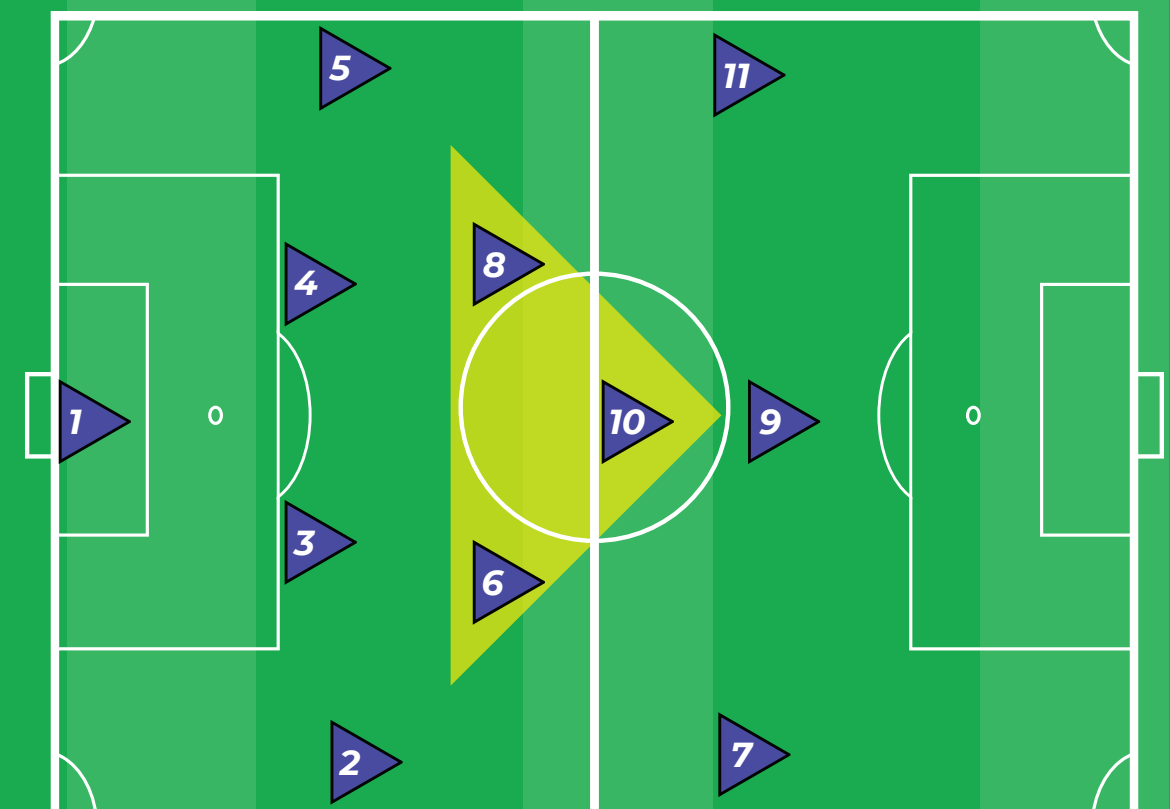
A TACTICAL MENU COVERING ALL ASPECTS

Every position has a specific number which makes learning to play as a team easier. We use this as our starting point to cover all the moments in a game, playing out from the back, combining in midfield, attacking centrally or from wide areas, defending near our goal, winning the ball back near the oppositions goal, and others. Generally giving a tactical team menu of the tasks required in a game, similar to the Four Core Skills in the Skill Acquisition Phase.

Basic Form 2: "Point" (no.6) To The Rear



Basic Form 1: "Point" (no.10) Forward





PARENTS ON GAME DAY

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO MAKE MY CHILD’S EXPERIENCE ENJOYABLE SO THAT THEY WANT ME TO BE THERE AT THE MATCH?

Encourage participation, but don't force it, teach the enjoyment is more important than winning. Children want to be applauded for their success. Think of the football field as a fun playground and not as a championship arena. Focus on the process of developing while playing and not the result. Do not swear under any circumstance around the children. Lead by example and respect all players, coaches, referees / game leaders and spectators – physical or verbal abuse will not be tolerated. There are severe implications to you and your child's participation, if found doing so.

Parents are to refrain from consuming alcohol at or in the vicinity of the field. In the event of such actions happening, the club, team official or match official has the right to ask the offender to leave or be removed from the venue and club.

Children do not want adults telling them instructions. Parents should also hold back their natural inclination to “loudly” offer advice and coaching pointers from the sidelines. Leave that to the coach, game leaders and the players to sort out as they are the ones playing. If you see an action on the field that your child has not reacted to, by the time you see it, say it and in turn your child hears you, the moment has gone, so keep it to yourself and let the players learn to think and play for themselves. Find a few moments to thank the officials and volunteers for their hard work after a game, especially if your child's team loses. You will be rewarded with the pleasure of seeing a surprised smile in return.

Enjoy the game and if you can't enjoy the game by just watching perhaps there are other things you may do elsewhere.

AFTER THE GAME

THERE IS NO RUSH. TAKE YOUR TIME AND ENJOY THE JOURNEY.

Don't keep the score, it is not important in small sided games, other than the officials recording results to balance the leagues in re-grading.

As a supportive parent you should not care who wins or loses, the children are enjoying themselves and learning to play football, and that is the objective. Youth sport provides an ideal avenue for early exposure to setbacks.

It allows supportive parents and adults to offer guidance with the stakes not nearly being as high as they sometimes will be later on in life.

You should not reward what you perceive as success or punish what you perceive as failure. Try not to evaluate your child's performance, he or she is playing to enjoy themselves.

DON'T PUNISH WHAT YOU PERCEIVE AS FAILURE.

Youth football is NOT a test, there are no failures only developing football players. Ask your child did you enjoy yourself?

What did you think you did well today? If you are greeted with the sound of silence, give off the gentle sounds of approval, and be sure he or she knows you are there for them.

We need to understand that the period following training and competition is a crucial time for a young athlete. It's important they be given the freedom to process it on their own.

GIRL FOOTBALL PLAYERS

MIXING IT UP IN FOOTBALL

Football is now one of the most popular choices of sport for girls to participate in. Now to be clear it's not 'girl's football' it's football. We need to encourage, whether you are male or female the love and passion for the game and teach the players how to be better at it.

Girls at an early age can compete with boys, just like they do at school sharing the same classrooms and so can also share football within a team environment.

Everyone is a beginner and it helps to introduce early socialising skills and reduces gender stereotyping. Physically there is no real difference initially, in fact the girls can have a physical advantage with the onset of puberty and growth spurts earlier than their male counterparts.

Within the mixed teams, note that we do not call them 'boys' teams', there is more depth of players and so more ability to grade them into similar ability groups, that does help with their development when they play with similar standard players.

The mixed teams tend to be more aggressive or have quicker play, that only leads to better playing ability by having refined skills and quicker decision-making ability, this definitely benefits the girls as we witness later in their playing jour-

ney. Having said this, we do have some watch outs that we need be aware of.

Girls can be more mature than the boys in the early age groups, and due to numbers there may be one or only a few girls in the team, so they can feel insecure. This is where the coach needs to make sure that it is a very inclusive environment and everyone is encouraged. We don't want them feeling isolated or judged.

In some programs they occasionally move the girls in training to an all-girl group where they soon realise that they are clearly doing well, that gives them added encouragement. We can also ensure that we question about how she feels being possibly the only girl and how this can work in her favour. Make sure she understands she does not have to prove anything extra than any of the other players in the team and like all teams, rotate positions to assure she gets the same opportunities for development as the boys.

Girls playing in a mixed environment is not for everyone, and sometimes it is not even an option due to cultural systems, but it does come with benefits that can't be ignored long term and are definitely worth considering and discussing with your club.





PLAYERS CONDUCT

PLAY BY THE RULES. THE RULES OF YOUR CLUB AND THE LAWS OF THE GAME.

You are there to enjoy yourself and learn to play football with your friends along with time away from devices and to be active. Never argue with a game leader or any other official – without these people, you can't play.

Control your temper, verbal abuse of officials and sledging other players doesn't help you

Never use ugly remarks based on race, religion, gender or ability – if you do, you'll let down your coach, teammates and family.

Remember, many such comments are actually now **illegal**.

enjoy or win any games. Be a team player, it's a team game, treat it that way. Treat all players as you would like to be treated – fairly.

Cooperate with your coach, the game leaders and your team-mates, they are all there to help you. Play for your own enjoyment and to improve your skills.



PLAY TIME

CHILDREN SPEND HALF AS MUCH TIME PLAYING OUTSIDE THAN WHAT THEIR PARENTS DID, SCREEN TIME DOMINATES FREE TIME

Let the game be the teacher is far less relevant today than when you spent more time outside playing the game, the infrequent time is not enough for that to even start to take place. Hence more emphasis is now given to the coach or teacher to assist in the players development.

We also say that unopposed or individual practice is outdated but it all adds to the progression of learning of the young player. Every development model for young players encourages ball manipulation and mastery exercises, because that repetition of technique through unopposed individual skill practices improves your ability to perform them correctly. These also apply to passing running with the ball, shooting and all movement and control of the ball.

Winning doesn't necessarily mean success where development is concerned, technique is required and that can be achieved at various stages in the development journey. For example, a 7 v 7 team consisting of a fast powerful forward and a defender who can kick the ball the full pitch length, and you play directly constantly, in order to win, you are actually denying your players the ability to develop or learn to play through and in the long run they won't develop the skills and techniques required to advance in the game.

CONFIDENCE EQUALS PRACTICE WITH SUCCESS.

SESSION STRUCTURE WITH AN OBJECTIVE, PLUS PRAISE SHOULD ALSO EQUAL MOTIVATION FOR THE PLAYER.



GAME LEADERS & OFFICIALS

NOT EVERYONE SEES THE PLAY EXACTLY THE SAME.

In the MiniRoo small sided space we have Game leaders that do exactly what their name suggests, they lead the game, they are not referees adjudicating as the players are young and most don't know the rules, so how can you police that.

The main objective of the MiniRoos football is to keep the game flowing so we need to lead them in the understanding of football and to allow them to play the match in a safe environment and manner for the children to enjoy themselves.

The game leader shows them how to do throw ins with repeat actions or do overs, has opposition teams move back so the possession team can have the opportunity to play, without instant harassment, and many other things.

The rules have been simplified and some are different to eleven aside to keep the game moving whilst reducing stoppages, interestingly FIFA has adopted some of the Small Sided rules and introduced them back up into the 11 aside game, because of the effect of reducing the stoppages. Being the person officiating a game is not as

easy as it appears. Remember many officials are fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters of football players, or are a football player themselves. Many other officials are fellow parents just trying to help youth football players develop. It is important to recognise that the game leader is doing his/her best.

They may see something that you did not see or maybe not what you wanted them to see. Match officials (or Game Leaders) deserve respect and need to be given sufficient support "Helping" the official to call a foul confuses children.

Disagreeing with the calls only hinders your child's respect for the referee and may hurt the view of the referee towards your child's team. Criticism causes officials to quit rather than become better.

Many officials quit the game, due to being criticised by the sideline, that is intolerable. The MiniRoo rules can be found on the Associations website, along with details of Game Leader programs and how you can be involved.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE COACH

LET THE COACH, COACH



Ask the Coach for his coaching philosophy, the team rules and guidelines. Don't ask questions during a game or training, always wait until the game or session ends. Arrange a time to speak with the coach if you have any concerns. Ask the coach how you can assist at training or at the game, but don't be offended if he/she declines your assistance. Be a supportive role model with positive behaviour and support what they are doing.

Ask your club about the Club Coach Coordinator program, and what qualifications your team's coach has. Attend coach and parent information nights to be aware of what your coach/teacher is teaching your child.

It is no different to your local school and teacher and how you interact with them.

ALL COACHES OF UNDER 12 TEAMS SHOULD HOLD A SKILL TRAINING COACHING CERTIFICATE TO BE CALLED COACH.

COACHING COURSES

The introduction or GRASSROOTS / MINIROOS, is an overview of what the basics are, and more importantly what you don't need to worry about, it takes a little over an hour for this introduction to coaching and game day management of your team. The next one and probably the most important of all, is the Skill Training Course.

This is an in depth look at football skill acquisition and it runs over a weekend or several evening sessions to cover all the elements of the four core skills. The Skill Training Course is the base of all coaching courses, focussing on technical skills or habits and setting up the teaching or delivery process for all coaching. After this we move into the tactical area with a Game Training Course, which covers everything

tactical in 11 a side football and again it is presented over several evenings or a weekend. They consist of no written assessments and are a mix of observation of model sessions and as much as possible, your own running of practical sessions on course.

After these you move into the advanced versions with each course taking 7-14 days depending on which one, covering your C License with Youth and Senior components, then your B License, followed by the A license, and for those inclined to coach the National Team, the Pro License.

All have many tasks to complete for a pass, on course and home projects to be handed in for assessment.



CDSFA/ Football Australia Qualified Coaches

The CDSFA has a coach accreditation system that requires all coaches to undergo a coaching course so that the players and the coach benefit from an understanding of how to coach the game.

This has been readily adopted and the players are now starting to see the benefits. Coaches are only recognised if they have accreditation, otherwise they are simply volunteers.

Along with the coaching program, the CDSFA is also actively encouraging more female coaches into the game and has introduced a Club Coach Coordination Program within all the clubs, so enquire for more information to see what your club is actively doing for your child. Our aim at the CDSFA is for everyone to enjoy being part of football.

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS SAFE FOR ALL

PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY.

Safety is paramount in everything we do, in the training sessions as part of a coach checklist, SAFETY is on the top of the list, but what does safety cover. A safe environment needs to cover both physical and emotional areas.

Can I monitor all of my players, are there dangerous objects nearby, such as rocks or sprinklers in the area we are working in, is the road easily accessible while chasing an errant football etc. What is happening on the peripheral or outside of our direct view, people that may not need to be present and have no part of proceedings, dogs not on leashes etc numerous lurking, potential dangers.

Make sure that the players have shin pads on, you practice for games, its compulsory to wear shin pads in games. In training, where you have more repetition and contact, wear them.

Emotional dangers are the other areas to be aware of, we need to ensure that everyone feels welcome and able to do their best and make mistakes in an open encouraging environment. We are not always at the same level and this can vary over the years but you always need to encourage your players to attempt what they can't do as yet, attempting and failing is the first stage in achieving something new.

Introduce and assist the new player into the group and don't make anyone feel that they do not belong, so we don't lose players from the game.

We also need to be aware of various forms of harassment and intimidation, this you may not even be aware its happening or you are in fact the culprit, it is something that always has many points of view, and someone's perception of what is happening to them is THEIR reality, so be conscious of words and actions and how they are interpreted by others.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN

All those working with children must have a current WWC number which must be provided to your club. This includes all volunteers and paid persons working with children under 18 years of age; all coaches, managers, all technical directors, all committee members and all referees. This is a priority and mandatory as set out by Australian law. All managers and coaches are required to understand and adhere to their respective CDSFA club protection policy. If you have any questions about member protection, please contact your club Member Protection Officer. Every club has one.



HEADING THE BALL AND CONCUSSION IS SERIOUS.

There has been a lot of attention in the global media and within various footballing associations about the negative effects of heading in junior players, with varying approaches being adopted around the world to tackle this issue. This includes a ban on heading in games for players under 11 years by US Soccer and the Football Associations of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We, at Canterbury Football, have taken a more pragmatic and evidence-based approach, with a long term, gentle learning of correct heading technique to reduce head impact magnitude during heading.

By using, where possible, specifically designed (such as Heading Pro ®) soft balls in a staged limited repetition training environment, we can show players how to head the ball safely, and develop heading proficiency within a controlled, safe training environment using very low velocity balls from throw-ins before young players are expected to head a higher-velocity kicked ball in games.

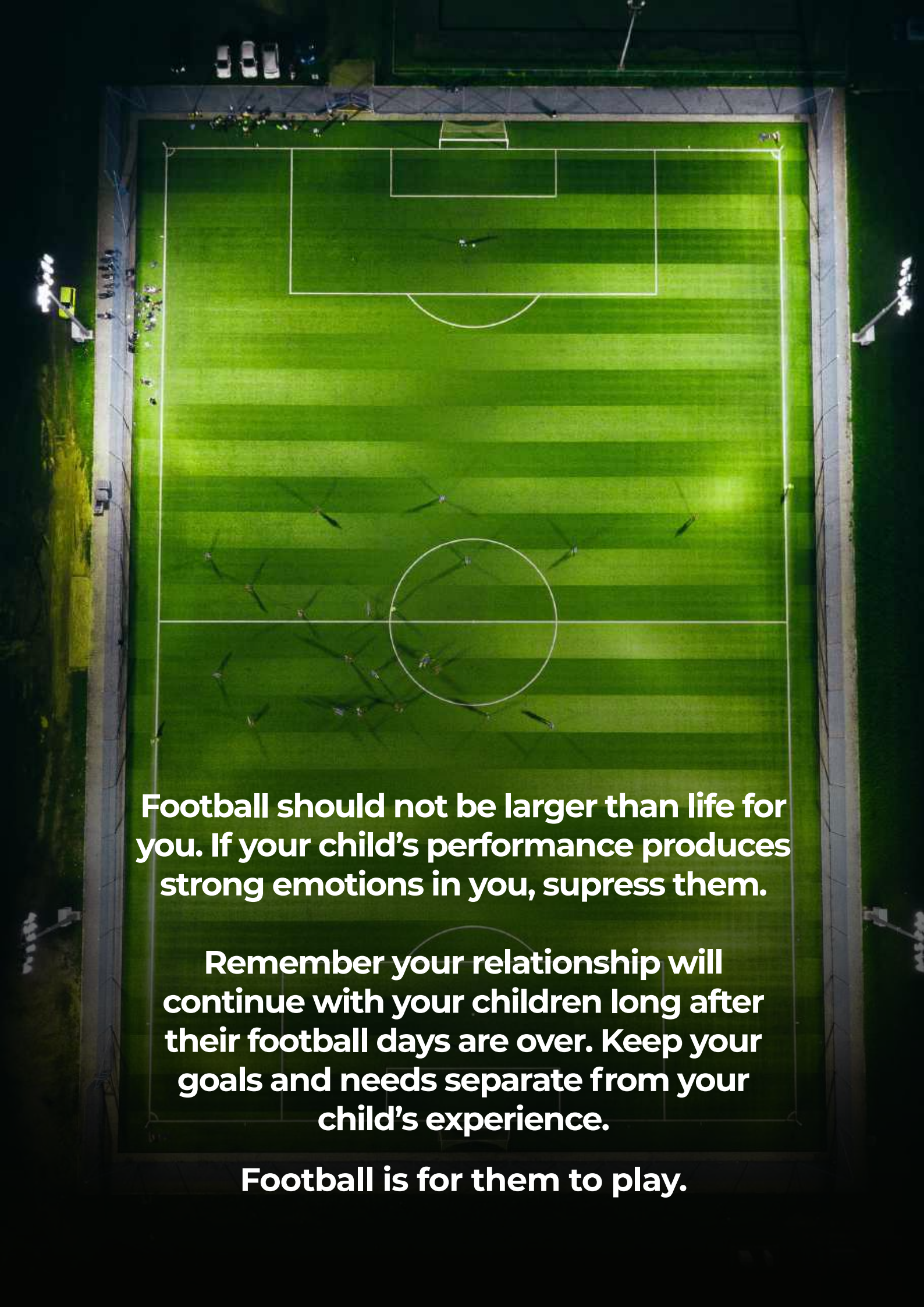
These practices will teach the player the skills of safely managing ball-head impact as well as how to position their body during heading duels, so that they are better prepared when they are at an age where heading becomes far more common in the 11 aside game at aged 12-13 years+. In younger years, where small sided games are integral to skill development, there are very few aerial balls as ball movement on the ground is encouraged, but that does not mean we should ignore the technical learning of heading.

A close-up photograph of a young player with light brown hair, wearing a dark green jersey, looking up and heading a white football with blue and green patterns. The background is dark.

**TOGETHER WE CAN
MAKE HEADING
SAFER FOR ALL
PLAYERS**

Although heading itself rarely causes concussions, we know that concussions can and do occur from heading duels (such as head-head clashes) and need to be taken very seriously with children. If there are head clashes or similar accidents, great care must be placed upon recognising the symptoms of concussion and removing the player from the game: "if in doubt, sit them out" and seek qualified medical advice.

Most clubs will have a process of requiring a medical clearance letter prior to the player being allowed to train or participate in future matches.

An aerial photograph of a football pitch at night, illuminated by bright floodlights. The pitch is green with white markings, and several players are visible on the field. The stands and surrounding area are dark.

Football should not be larger than life for you. If your child's performance produces strong emotions in you, suppress them.

Remember your relationship will continue with your children long after their football days are over. Keep your goals and needs separate from your child's experience.

Football is for them to play.



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