

SAN JUAN SOCCER CLUB COACHING MANUAL

I. **Mission Statement**

To be the premier soccer club in Northern California and one of the top clubs in both the western United States and the Country.

II. **General Soccer Philosophy**

The San Juan Soccer Club teaches an attacking-possession style of soccer. This means San Juan teams are taught to attack or go forward as quickly and as often as possible, tempered by a very healthy respect for importance of ball possession.

III. **Developmental System**

The San Juan Soccer Club has implemented a developmental system in order to teach its attacking-possession style of play. The developmental system has three phases: the Developmental stage, the Transitional stage and the Competitive stage. The Developmental stage is from under 10's through under 12's. The Transitional stage is the under 13's and under 14's. The Competitive stage is the under 15's through the under 18's.

In each of the Developmental stages coaches are expected to present specific individual and team principals of the game to their teams. Each area of development will focus on specific individual and team approaches to the game with the underlying goal to provide each player that moves through the process a complete education on the individual technical and team tactical concepts of the game.

Coaches in each age group are responsible for introducing and refining the individual aspects of the game as outlined for their age groups. Tactical instruction and preparation for games in each age group should be designed with the goal of providing each team the best opportunity to win under competitive game situations over the course of the season. In the younger age groups, this means a high focus on the enforcement of individual technical principals in a simple tactical formation. Team success will be determined based on the overall effective use of individual technical principals, individual work rate and competitiveness of the team with consideration for their initial technical proficiency and athleticism. At the older age groups, this means a high focus on the enforcement of both individual technical principals and the understanding of team tactics as they change from game to game based on the level of competition, field conditions and the playing season. Team success will be determined based on the overall competitiveness of the team, execution of tactical proficiency consistent with the Club's developmental process, overall team work rate and team achievements during the year (major regional or national competitions).

IV. **Seasonal Approach**

The San Juan Soccer Club coaches should follow a seasonal approach to teaching the game in order to fully develop the teams and each individual player over the year. Each

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season is currently divided into three segments: the Summer season, the League season, and the “Cup” season. [Unfortunately, due to the multiple organizations the San Juan Soccer Club belongs to, there is significant overall between these three seasons and no “single calendar” at this time.]

The Summer season is comprised of tournament play, the Super Y League, the US Club Soccer Cup and international travel. During the Summer season, coaches will focus on the basic disciplines that will be the basis for the technical and tactical play during the year for the age group. This will include the advancement of the technical criteria and the introduction of new tactical aspects of the game. In addition, coaches will use the Summer season to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the team and individual players as they compare to the criteria for development in the age group.

During the League season, coaches will focus on implementing and refining the tactical and technical aspects of the game introduced in the Summer season. During the League season, teams will place more emphasis on the development of a consistent style of play and more directed focus on addressing individual technical issues with players. At the same time, this is the part of the season where coaches will often be encouraged to try different systems of play or players in different positions.

The Cup season includes the tournaments leading up to the State Cup, Regional Cup and National Cup, as well as the US Club Soccer Cup. During the Cup season, the focus of every team will be to maximize their competitive advantages on the field in an effort to compete at the highest possible level during the Cup season. Coaches are asked to coach in a manner aimed at giving each team a legitimate chance of winning. At the younger age levels (under 10’s through under 13’s) the coaches should make every effort to get all players into each game. Specific playing time issues, however, will be determined based on the game conditions, field conditions and the flow of the game. At the older age levels, there should be set starting line up during Cup play with a system of rotation that becomes more focused on the effectiveness of individual players on the specific game. The focus on effective play may result in a diverse allocation of playing time for individual players from game to game depending on the nature of the game. In some cases, players with certain strengths and weaknesses that do not fit well into the nature of the specific game may receive very limited minutes or may not play depending on the game condition. Coaches are strongly encouraged to manage player rotation in a manner that allows all players to participate on at least a limited basis.

V. Playing Time

A. *Developmental Group*

Playing time in this group should be reasonably distributed amongst all of the players on the team. During the Summer and League seasons, starting lineups should vary and players should be given playing time at two to three different positions (recommended that players only play two positions in any one game). During the Cup season, teams may have a more consistent starting lineup and

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playing time may become less proportional for all players depending on the competition level and ability of individual players to compete in specific game situations. Coaches are still strongly encouraged, however, to make sure players get reasonable playing time in every game.

B. *Transitional Group*

Playing time in this group becomes less proportionally distributed with a greater focus on individual effectiveness in games and training. Players in this age group will be awarded playing time based on technical and tactical proficiency. Teams will generally have a core group of starters that may play a greater proportion of games than non-starters. During the Summer and League seasons, coaches are encouraged to allocate playing time to all players to allow them significant exposure to game situations. During the Cup season, playing time will be more focused on team performance than individual opportunity. The team may develop a standard starting lineup and a consistent approach to player rotations on the field that provides the core starting unit more playing time. Playing time in critical competitions will be based primarily on the individual players' ability to effectively execute in that game situation.

C. *Competitive Group*

Playing time in this group is appropriated based on an individual players' ability to execute the tactical and technical principles within the teams overall playing style(s) in training and games. Coaches are strongly encouraged to provide reasonable playing time to all players but playing time is not guaranteed during any part of the year. During the Summer and League seasons, team will generally have a core starting group of players and a reasonably defined rotation for nonstarters. Coaches are strongly encouraged to provide playing opportunities to every player during these parts of the year. Actual allocation of time, however, will depend on the individual players' ability to execute in specific game situations. During the Cup season, playing time is solely based on the players' ability to execute in specific game situations. Playing time may vary depending upon competition, field conditions and game situations (referees, availability of other players due to injury or suspension, and focus on attack oriented or defense oriented game plan). Playing time in the Cup season is not guaranteed due to the heightened focus on winning rather than player/team development.

VI. **Practice Structure**

The San Juan coaches are directed to run structured practices based on age appropriate, curriculum-based themes. Most practices should include the following elements:

- a) A technical warm up with the ball, including some fitness, strength and/or agility work;
- b) Theme-based tactical small sided exercises (games); and,

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c) Full sided or large games to goal with and without coaching (“free games”). Whenever possible, short scrimmages (30-45 minutes) with older and younger San Juan teams should be arranged on a weekly basis.

It is critical to the success of the Club that practices are both physically and mentally demanding. Practice drills should always be related directly to playing in a game environment in order for our players to learn how to “read the game.” Reading the game is sometimes described as the ability to “see, hear or feel” the game or “recognize, interpret and anticipate.” Coaches must articulate to players the applicability of every exercise to game conditions.

The exercises teaching the various technical skills and tactical principles should be repeated over and over during a season. Coaches in all age groups should attempt to maintain a standard format of training exercises. Players should not be required to learn new drills for training on standard technical and tactical disciplines. The players should be focused on the technical skill or tactical principle they are trying to master or perfect. [It is important to recognize, for example, that many of the top clubs in the world often use only 3-4 exercises to teach passing. These exercises are used from under 10’s through the senior professional team.] At the same time, San Juan coaches need to remember that it is very important for players to have fun and use their imaginations during practices, and the coaches need to encourage this type of outlook towards the game.

In running structured practices, the San Juan coaches should keep the following principles in mind:

- a) the ball is the best teacher of technique;
- b) the game is the best teacher of tactics; and,
- c) Soccer players come to practice to play soccer.

Game Orientated Training

Training needs to be conducted in the part of the field where the technical skill and/or tactical principle will actually be used, i.e., where the situation will occur in order to make the exercises “real” to the players. When coaches are working on defending in the back third or attacking in the front third, there must be a full goal and a goalkeeper in the drill. This is especially true when it comes to any drills focused on finishing or defending against scoring opportunities. A majority of our full sided or large group exercises should include a goal to defend or attack in order to significantly improve our Club’s efficiency in front of goal.

VII. Systems of Play

Under 10’s through Under 13’s- Offensively, all teams should play with 3 strikers to make sure our teams and players learn the importance of width in the attack. At these age levels, 2 strikers cannot cover side-to-side and outside midfielders cannot get up and down the flanks in order to assure we have wing play in the front third of the field.

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Defensively, all of the Club's teams should learn to play without a sweeper, at least during parts of the Summer and League seasons. The Club requires the use of this system in order to teach all defenders to communicate with each other during the play (one of the major deficiencies in American youth soccer.) A flat back 3 or 4 requires all of the defenders to learn the concepts of pressure-cover-balance and importance of depth and communication when defending. A sweeper may be used in Cup play or tournaments with the prior approval of the under 10-14 coaching coordinator.

Under 14's and Under 15's- coaches should introduce the teams and players to a variety of systems and formations of play including the 4-4-2, 3-5-2, 4-3-3. While each team will have a primary system of play, each team should be exposed to these different systems and styles in order to learn how to maximize their competitive advantages under different game condition and against different opponents.

Offensively, the teams must work on our attacking-possession style of soccer by playing both through the midfield and playing to the strikers and dropping the ball back to the midfielders. The teams will emphasize quick movement of the ball (circulation of the ball), playing diagonally, switching positions (circulation of players) and the use of aggressive individual attacking in the final third of the field to create scoring opportunities. All players must understand their roles in different areas of the field (attacking third/half versus defending third/half).

Defensively, the teams will cover all aspects of defensive structure including playing with high pressure, low pressure, man-to-man and zonal defending, playing with a flat back line and with a sweeper. While each team will have a primary system and formation of defending, players must be educated in the advantages of each defending style. Players in this age group must have a clear understanding of the purpose for each defensive style of play including how to defend when leading, when trailing, when playing a weaker team and when playing teams with strong technical or physical advantages.

Under 16's though Under 18's- teams will utilize multiple formations depending upon the ability of the individual players on the team, field/game conditions and the opponent. Each team in these age groups will identify a formation that fits best with the technical and tactical make-up of the team. All teams, however, should be proficient in multiple formations and styles of play as a means of competing against teams with different strengths and weaknesses. (As outlined for the Under 14 and Under 15 Age Groups.)

Examples:

- a) Teams that need to play with 3 up top or have the ability to do so either because they have a particularly strong center midfielder or 3 very strong defenders are encouraged to do so.
- b) Teams may change attacking or defending strategy based on an opponent's style or individual players. Changing formation (3-4-3 to 4-4-2) or style (high pressure to low pressure) can neutralize the advantage of an opponents or allow a team to take advantage of the weakness of a particular opponent

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- c) While some clubs and Country's have a set system from bottom to top, the San Juan Soccer Club does not currently have enough top level players to choose from in order for the Club to just "plug" them into a set system of play. Part of the goal of the Club is to develop more players from our younger teams in a way that will allow the Club to have a common system of play from the under 10's through the under 18's. For the moment, however, the Club needs to adjust the system based on the players available to each team and to a lesser extent the opponent.

VIII. Curriculum

A. *Under 10's*

The focus at the under 10's is for the players to have fun and work on their technically skills. The number one technique the coaches are expected to teach is ball control/dribbling. In addition, at the under 10's the coaches are expected to introduce the proper techniques for basic fundamental technical disciplines of passing, receiving and support angles that support the Club's possession-oriented game.

1. Technical Development

- a. Dribbling-Introduction to technical disciplines for inside of the foot, outside of the foot and instep; teach the concepts of ball control, change of speed and change of direction.
 - (i)- for possession (angles and ball on the foot away from the defender)
 - (ii)- running with the ball (to take space)
 - (iii)- to beat a defender
- b. Passing- Introduction of technical disciplines for inside of the foot, outside of the foot and instep; teach the concepts of accuracy, use of the proper foot/surface and support angles with body positioned correctly to receive the ball.
 - (i)- wall passes
 - (ii)- through passes
 - (iii)- use of foot away from the defender
- c. Shooting- Introduction of technical disciplines for instep, outside of the foot and inside of the foot finishing; teach the concepts of

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shooting towards the far post when at an angle to goal and keeping shots low.

(i)- shots from dribbling (one on none and one on one)

(ii) shots from wall passes (two on none and two on one)

(iii) shots from through passes (two on none and two on one)

d. Receiving the ball (trapping)- this should be done as part of the warm up or cool down and should not take more than 10-15 minutes.

(i) with the inside of the foot, outside of the foot and instep for both low balls and high balls. Include receiving to feet and receiving with direction/movement.

(ii) with the top of the thigh and the inside and outside of the thigh

(iii) with the chest

e. Heading the ball- done very minimally with the emphasis on teaching how to head the ball properly.

2. Tactical Development

a. One v one attacking and defending

b. Two v one attacking and defending

c. One v two defending

d. Two v two attacking and defending

e. Three v one possession and attacking and defending

3. Physical Development

a. All fitness should be with the ball.

b. Most of the fitness should come from playing small-sided games.

c. Spend time in every practice working on coordination, flexibility and agility.

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4. Psychological Development
 - a. Make exercises and games competitive.
 - b. Reward winners more than “punish” losers (at least a two to one ratio). In the absence of fitness, winners do not have to help put equipment away.

B. Under 11's and 12's

The focus at the under 11's and 12's remains on having fun and improving the players' ability to execute the basic technical/tactical disciplines of the game introduced at under 10's. While dribbling is still emphasized, the coaches are also asked to focus on the other technical skills, in particular passing and receiving the ball.

1. Technical Development

All of the same technical skills are practiced, i.e., dribbling, passing, shooting, receiving the ball and heading. The distance of the passes and shots is now increased and more movement and pressure from an opponent are added to the exercises.

2. Tactical Development

The tactical exercises listed above for under 10's number 2, a through e are repeated and the following new tactical exercises are added:

- f. three v two attacking and defending
- g. two v three attacking and defending
- h. three v three attacking and defending
- i. four v two attacking and defending
- j. four v three attacking and defending
- k. three v four attacking and defending
- l. four v four attacking and defending

3. Physical Development

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Same as the under 10's, i.e., fitness with the ball, mostly in small-sided games and work on coordination, flexibility and agility. If players begin to grow/mature early, focus on maintaining their flexibility and agility.

4. Psychological Development

Same as the under 10's, i.e., make exercises and games competitive and reward winners.

C. *Under 13's and 14's*

The focus at the under 13's and 14's is advanced technical skill, small group tactics, i.e., the backs playing together, the midfielders player playing together..., the right sided players playing together, the left sided players playing together..., and on tactical functional training by position.

1. Technical Development

All of the same technical skills are practiced, i.e., dribbling, passing, shooting, receiving the ball and heading. All of these skills must be practiced at speed and with pressure from an opponent that is significantly more challenging than the prior age groups. The San Juan coaches must be very demanding on:

- (a) the quality of the exercises;
- (b) the use of the proper technique (using the right part of the foot or putting the proper bend on the ball or playing a properly weighted pass);
- (c) the speed of play and level of defensive pressure applied toward the exercise.

Playing balls in the air is worked on extensively during this two-year period and receiving balls is now worked on from these long balls instead of from a teammate throwing the ball to the player. Heading is worked on significantly more than at the under 10 through under 12 age levels.

2. Tactical Development

All of the tactical exercises listed above for under 10's number 2, a through e and for under 11's and 12's number 2, f through j are repeated. The coaches are now asked, however, to group players in each of these exercises according to the primary and secondary position, and in combinations that usually play together in games. For example, in a two v two game, the coach could play two strikers against two defenders or the left striker and left midfielder against the right striker and right midfielder. In addition, the following tactical exercises are added at the under 13's and under 14's:

- m. five v two

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- n. five v three
- o. five v four
- p. six v three
- q. six v four
- r. six v five
- s. Virtually every practice should include a 30-35 minute full-sided scrimmage against an older or younger San Juan team or an offense versus defense drill. Generally, these involve 7 (3 or 4 defenders and 3 or 4 midfielders) plus a goalkeeper against 6 (3 strikers and 3 midfielders) or 8 (3 strikers, 3 midfielders and 2 outside backs).

3. Physical Development

While the majority of fitness should still be done with the ball and in small-sided games, at the under 13's and under 14's, the coaches will begin to add fitness without the ball and more strength training. During this two-year period, however, the San Juan coaches are asked to pay particular attention to coordination, flexibility and agility as the players go through puberty. Fitness without the ball should be a small supplement to the overall work rate of a training session and not the primary source of physical conditioning for the players.

4. Psychological Development

Continue to make as many exercises and games as possible as competitive and reward the winners. At under 13's and under 14's, coaches can reward the winners by having them do less push ups, sit ups, jumps, sprints.... Losers should not be punished, however, winners should be rewarded. In addition, coaches should begin the process of creating exercise that challenge the team and individual skill level to the point of failure. The introduction of failure must be carefully managed only to expose team and individual weaknesses in an instructional format. Coaches must pay particular attention to providing specific technical and tactical assistance to players during and after these exercises. The goal of creating this environment is to help the team and individual players identify specific weaknesses and provide them specific instruction to overcome the weaknesses.

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D. *Under 15's and 16's*

The focus at the under 15's and 16's is a thorough understanding of large group tactics, i.e., the goalkeeper, backs and midfielders playing defense as a unit or the midfielders and strikers playing offense as a unit and both technical and tactical speed of play.

1. Technical Development

All technical skills are practiced in tactical exercises in these age groups. Particular attention should be paid to the players' preparation in order to increase the speed of individual and team play. Players need to be encouraged to play one-touch soccer as often as possible, to trap away from pressure and to take players on one v one in the offensive half of the field. Direct focus on individual technical skills in training will be limited to advance technical skills required to execute advance tactical progressions in game situations. Players with individual technical deficiencies are expected improve these areas outside of team training.

2. Tactical Development

All of the tactical exercises listed for under 13's and 14's number 2, h through m are repeated. Tactical team knowledge is more focused on players have a full understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of different formations and styles of play. Coaches are required to introduce teams to multiple formations and styles of play and educate teams on the tactical advantages and disadvantages of each formation and style, including the most effective use of each formation/style in competitive game situations.

Offensively, teams must be instructed on understand tactical difference when playing in a 4-4-2, 3-4-3 and a 3-5-2. In addition, teams should be introduced and learn the basic offensive progressions required to attack in each formation to advance the ball from the back third to the attacking third. Teams should be taught to understanding how to attack different defensive strategies by their opponent and functional disciplines that must be executed at each position to successful attack under different game conditions (fields, referees, quality of opponents, weather...etc).

Defensively, teams must be taught the strengths and weakness of defending in different formations and styles, including the individual disciplines required of players for the team to successfully defending in this formation and style. In addition, teams must be taught how to defend in different formations based on game situations (playing with a lead, from behind, in different types of weather, under different field conditions and with varying degrees of officiating). The goal of tactical instruction in

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these age groups is to prepare the team to play against various types of teams in order to attack and defend in ways that will allow the team the best chance of winning that particular game.

3. Physical Development

Players in this age group should be introduced to off-field fitness, strength and agility training techniques. Team fitness is focused on individual work rate in technical and tactical training exercise. Fitness without the ball is still limited as players are now expected to supplement fitness work in team training with individual personal training on non-team training days during the week. Players in these age groups must begin to maintain a high level of fitness at all times to meet the demanding level of training and competition.

Training sessions must be focused on developing a high level of individual and team work rate. Because the competition at these age groups is extremely high, coaching instruction must be focused on creating a training session that incorporates fast paced, high-pressure play at a competitive level. Therefore, coaches must focus their attention to the individual work rate of players in addition to the technical and tactical proficiency of the team.

4. Psychological Development

Training sessions must include competitive and fast paced exercises that challenge all areas of the team and player development. It is extremely important that all players are challenged to the point of failure at technical and tactical levels of the game. At the U15 and U16 age groups, coaches must periodically create opportunities to challenge the team and expose individual and team weaknesses with the intent of assisting the players/team with the techniques and knowledge for overcoming these weaknesses.

E. Under 17's and 18's

The Under 17 and Under 18 age groups are the culmination of the developmental program. Teams in these age groups have been introduced to all individual and small group concepts required to efficiently compete at all levels in varying formations and styles. The focus of the Under 17 and Under 18 age groups is to address team tactics to effectively compete in all competitive situations. This age group will focus predominately on finding a competitive advantage in each game and competition by teaching players to adapt to the opponents style, formation and competitive advantages and disadvantages. Coaching tactics will concentrate

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on preparing players for in-game adjustments in order to effectively attack and defend against the current opponent.

1. Technical Development

Technical training on basic skills will be concentrated to warm-up exercises and non-training technical work by individual players. Players at these age groups should have a full command of all basic technical functions on the ball. Training time will not address these functions outside the warm-up, however, basic individual technical skill levels will be challenged as part of tactical training. Players with weaknesses in basic technical areas are expected to dedicate non-training time to the development of these skills. Coaches should allocate moderate training time for advanced technical skill development, but must immediately incorporate this technical skill into a tactical exercise to progress the topic.

2. Tactical Development

All of the tactical exercises listed for under 15's and 16's and prior age groups must be repeated on a continuous basis, but at speeds and in space that heightens the technical and tactical demands on the team and players. Tactical team knowledge is focused on understanding the advantages in styles and formations for upcoming games. The team should utilize its knowledge of basic tactical formations and styles to execute game plans for a specific opponent or expanding offensive or defensive execution.

Offensively, teams should have a strong understanding of the significant tactical difference when playing in a 4-4-2, 3-4-3 and a 3-5-2. In addition, teams should have a very solid understanding of the basic offensive progression required in each formation to advance the ball from the back third to the attacking third in a possession or counter attacking style. Teams should also have a complete understanding of how to attack different defensive strategies by their opponent and functional disciplines that must be executed at each position to successfully attack under each game condition.

Defensively, teams must have a strong understanding of the strengths and weakness of defending in different formations and styles, including the individual disciplines required of players for the team to successfully defend in this formation and style. In addition, teams must have a complete understanding of how to defend in different formations based on game situations (playing with a lead, from behind, in different types of weather, under different field conditions and with varying degrees of officiating). The basic fundamentals of team tactics on defense should include adjustments to be made to neutralize dominant attacking players, or offset physical or technical advantages of an opponent.

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3. Physical Development

Players in this age group should be participating in a complete to off-field fitness, strength and agility program. Team fitness is focused on individual work rate in technical and tactical training exercise. Fitness without the ball is still limited as players are now expected to supplement fitness work in team training with individual personal training on non-team training days during the week. Coaches may from time to time incorporate standard fitness tests such as a Cooper Test, Beep Run and other exercises with established standards to determine an appropriate fitness level of competition. Players in these age groups must begin to maintain a high level of fitness at all times to meet the demanding level of training and competition.

Training sessions must be focused on developing a high level of individual and team fitness incorporated into tactical exercises. Because the competition at these age groups is extremely high, coaching instruction must be focused on creating a training session that incorporates fast paced, high-pressure play at a competitive level and must include reasonable levels of physical contact and challenges. Therefore, coaches must focus their attention to the introducing competitive exercises that challenge the mental, physical, psychological and tactical thresholds of the team and players.

4. Psychological Development

Training sessions must include competitive and fast paced exercises that challenge all areas of the team and player development. It is extremely important that all players are challenged to the point of failure at technical and tactical levels of the game. At the U17 and U18 age groups, coaches must consistently create opportunities to challenge the team and expose individual and team weaknesses with the intent of assisting the players/team with the techniques and knowledge for overcoming these weaknesses.