

Single-Digit Soccer

How should we introduce U-Littles to the Beautiful Game?

Beau Dure, Author and Parent Coach



USYOUTHSOCCER.ORG

About me

Writer

- USA TODAY, 1999-2010
- KRT column on MLS, 1999
- Freelance: ESPN, Fox
- *Long-Range Goals* (MLS history)
- *Enduring Spirit* (Washington Spirit's first season)
- SportsMyriad.com



About me

Parent coach

- Two boys, now U9 and U11
- E license, getting D in 2015
- Positive Coaching workshops
- NSCAA webinars and convention
- House league, All-Stars, “crossover”

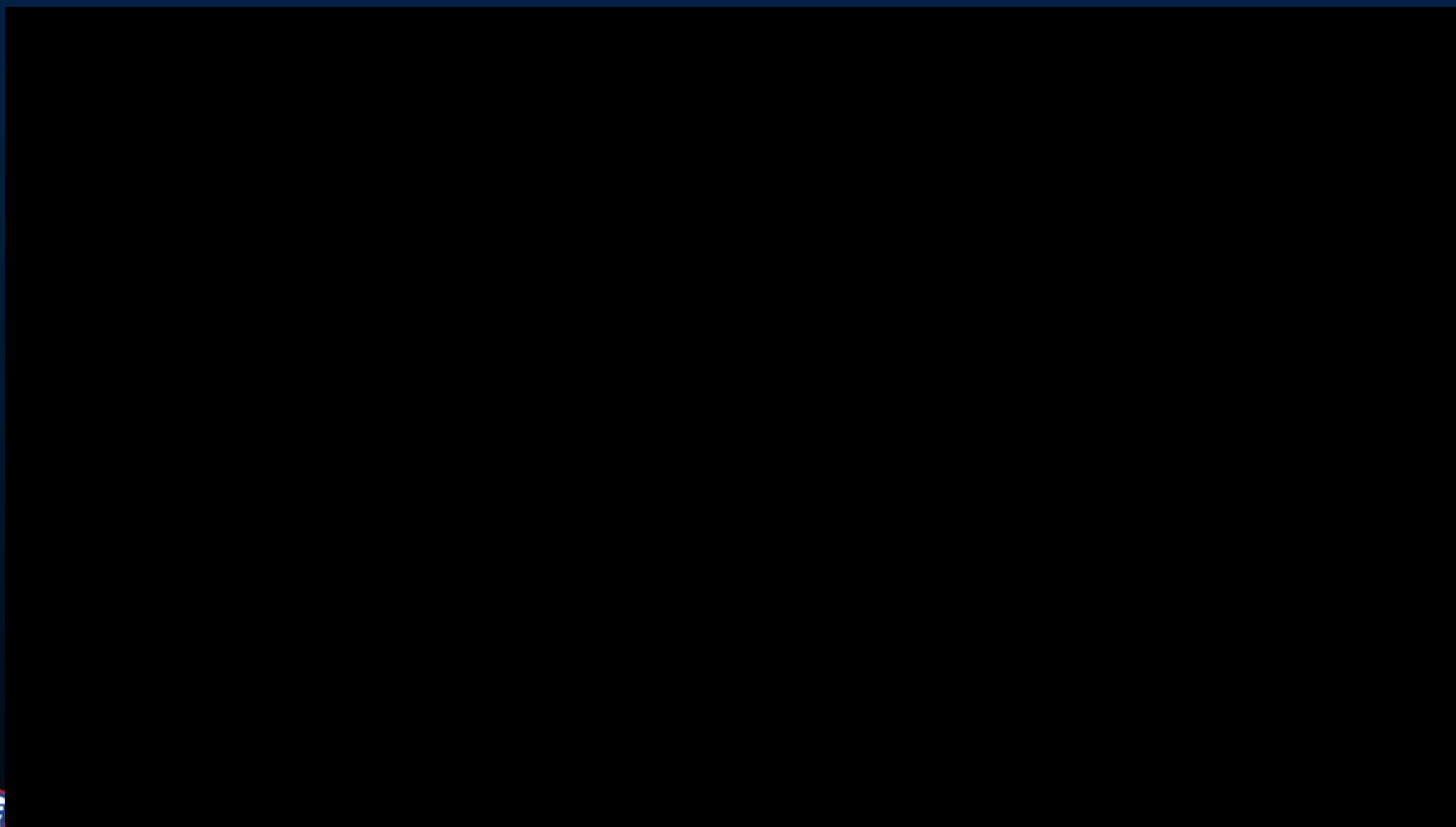
Player

- Retired over-30 goalkeeper
- Starting sweeper, U14 Athens (Ga.) Applejacks 1970



The Single-Digit Years

U10, U9, U8, U7 ... U2?



The Single-Digit Years

Mixed messages

- We want it to be fun, not serious. But we can't help ourselves.

U.S. Youth Soccer recommends U10 players should not:

- Be involved in results-oriented tournaments, only play days, jamborees or festivals with a participation award.
- Be exposed to tryouts.
- Be labeled recreational or competitive.

U9 Boys Red Team Win State Cup Championship!

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The U9 Boys Red team coached by Professional Heach Coach Marcus Watson finished their season with a bang by winning their State Cup final 2-0 against a tough squad from Rocklin FC.

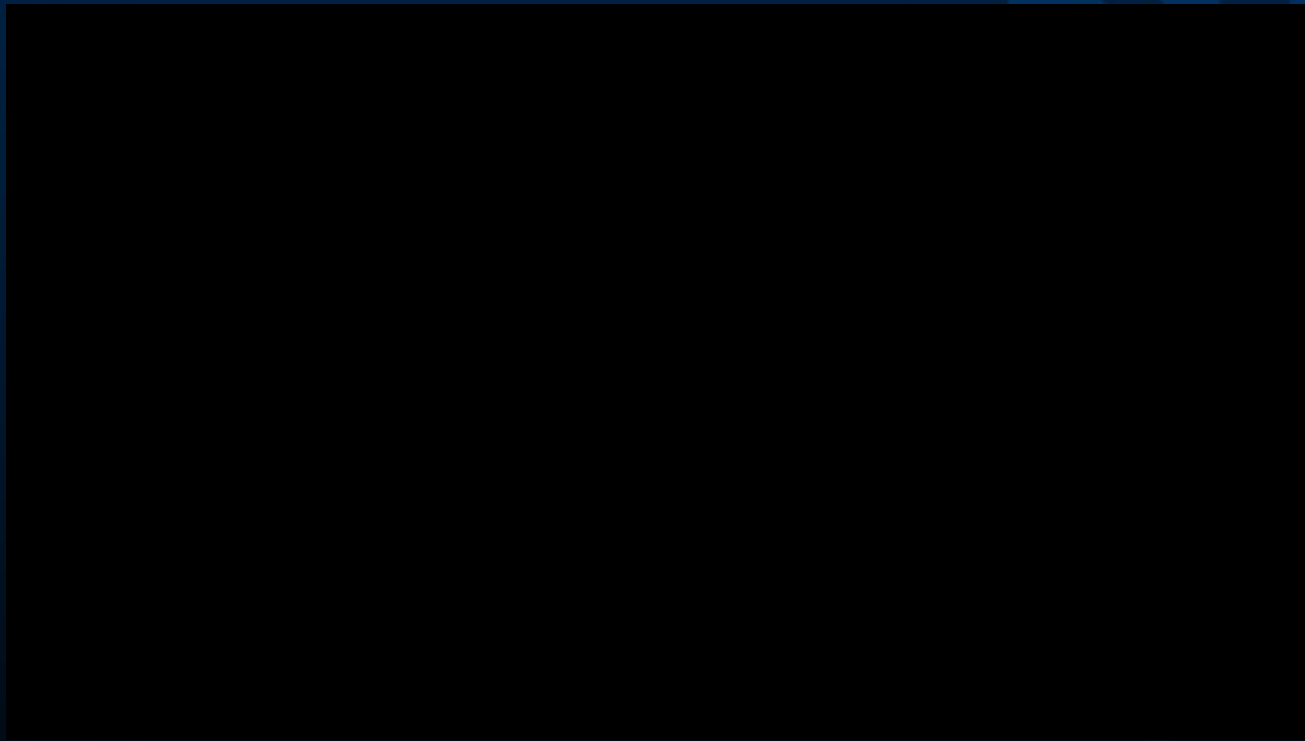
The Single-Digit Years

Some kids don't make the travel team (or the "A" team or whatever)



The Single-Digit Years

Some kids do, and they get a big head



The Single-Digit Years

Trickling down to lower ages

U8 ID Day

Player evaluation for families interested in U7/U8 Challenge and U8 Academy programs

U6-U10 Tryouts (S1)

Categories:

Date: May 20, 2014

Time: 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm

U6-U10 Boys and Girls Tryouts (Session 1)

Boys and Girls Ages 4-7 Years Old

Coaches

Paid staff trainers

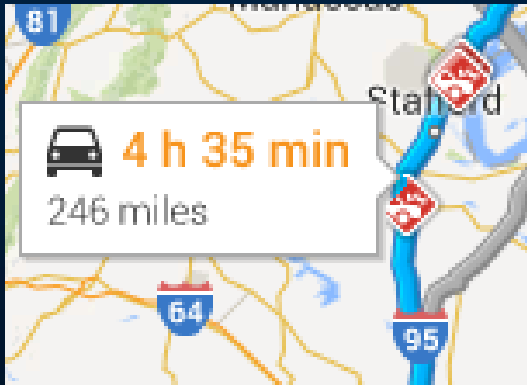
Senior USSDA and ECNL players



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Issues

1. How much is this going to cost??



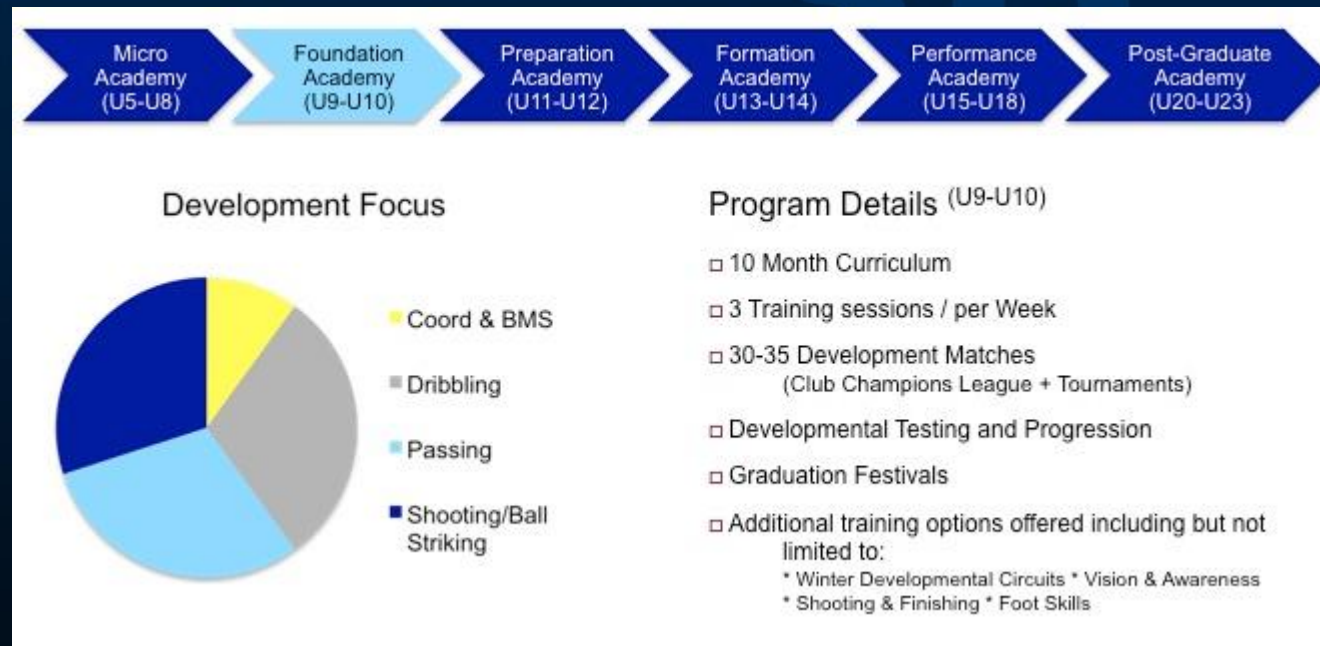
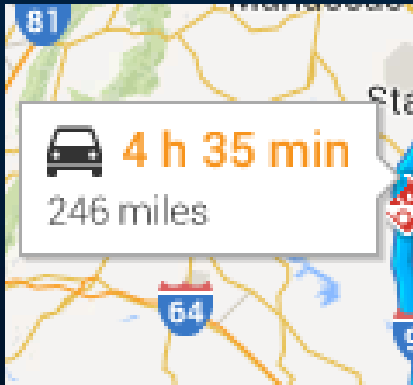
U8 Juniors	\$465 / season
U9 - U12 Boys and Girls	\$961 / season
U13 - U16 Boys	\$1036 / season
U13 - U16 Girls	\$1036 / season
U17 - U18 Boys and Girls	\$1036 / season

The following list of team expenses are not covered by the new registration system, and a team-specific collection and payment process should be managed directly by the designated team officials.

- Uniforms and accessories
- Tournament Entrance Fees
- Tournament Travel Expenses for coaches (and players)
- Winter Indoor League Fees
- Patches/Pins
- All other fees and expenses not explicitly covered by the current system (e.g. team parties, coach gifts, etc.)

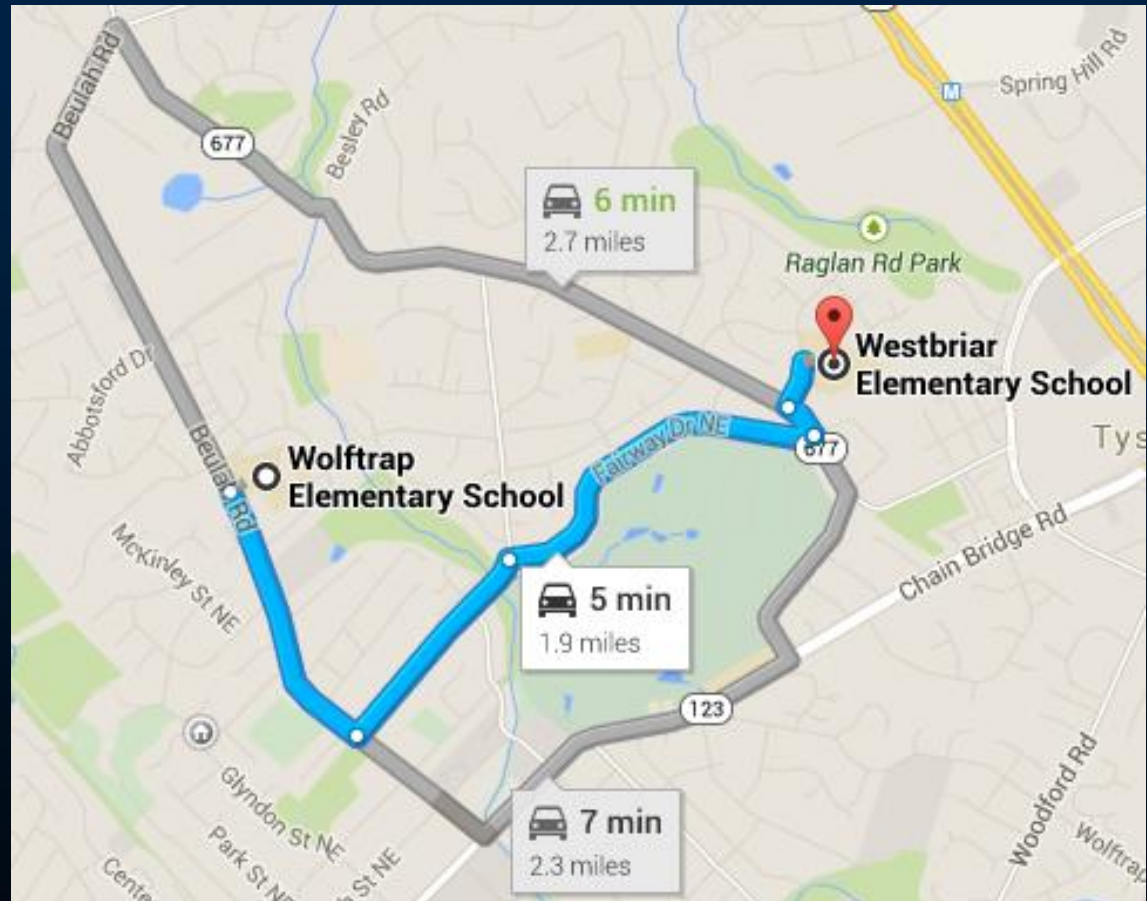
Issues

2. How much time is this going to take?



Issues

3. What do parents want? Really?



Issues

4. Do we need to play year-round?



Issues

- 5. Winning vs. development
- 6. Fun vs. development
- 7. Fun vs. structure (remember free play?)
- 8. Fun vs. parity
- 9. Development vs. parity



Issues

10. And what type of development?



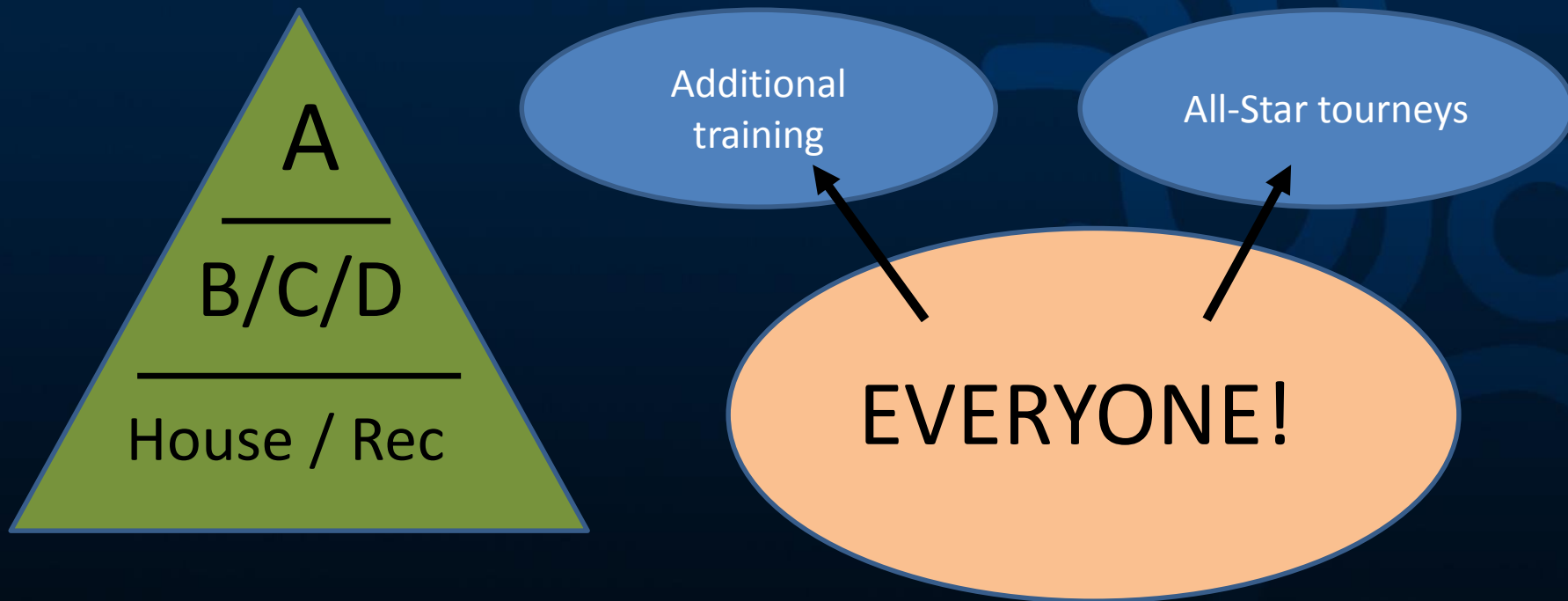
No passing?



Over dribbling?

Issues

11. Tracking (or segregating)



Issues

12. Finally - are we burning out kids?

Why do Children Dropout?

Want to do other

MailOnline

SPORTS WEBSITE OF

How to Avoid Burnout in Young Athletes

By Marty Schupak | Youth Sports Club

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Pin it

SoccerAmerica's
Youth

Home > Youth Soccer

Beware of Te

by Sam Snow, Januar

Burnout in youth sports is a threat to the physical and mental stamina of young athletes. As competitive youth sports engage younger participants each year, the threat of both physical and mental burnout in young players grows more imminent.

Over-involvement in competitive leagues has long-term consequences for kids, if after the first 12 years of their lives they abandon organized sports or physical activity completely. This



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Radical ideas

1. Cost
2. Time
3. Parents
4. Year-round
5. Win vs. develop
6. Fun vs. develop
7. Fun vs. structure
8. Fun vs. parity
9. Develop vs. parity
10. Develop ... what?
11. Track/segregate
12. Burnout



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Tailor practices to your team, not vice versa

Some kids may not keep with the curriculum your technical director sets. Some kids have different motivations. Some kids need more “fun” – some need a more serious environment.



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Put more coaching education ONLINE

Parent coaches don't have a ton of weekends to devote to getting a D license.



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Don't push specialization

Let kids play basketball. *Encourage* kids to play basketball to learn team tactics. Or swim to stay fit. Or try martial arts to learn self-discipline. Or chess or acting or music or anything else to be well-rounded people.

Anything to avoid burnout.



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Teach positions from Day 1

No, you don't want to spend U6 practices working on set pieces. But why not encourage kids who are ahead of the curve tactically? And why not try to discourage the "magnetball" sessions that reward the most athletic kids and no one else?

Also, are soccer players less intelligent than football players?



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Do programs through schools

Parents who have trouble taking kids to one soccer practice a week have no trouble signing up their kids for programs that either keep them at school or pick them up from school *five* days a week. Why is it so much easier for my kids to do karate than it is to play soccer?



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League play – no games > 90 minutes away

Tournaments, sure. Those are special occasions. But not a weekly grind.



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Part-time travel, not full time

This works for a lot of other sports. Offer all sorts of extra programs for those who are serious about soccer.

Give players a *variety* of experience. Not just the cog on the well-oiled travel team – also the guy trying to keep his House team competitive.



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Group by skill level, not age group

Our local Little League doesn't have "U8" or "3rd grade." It has Rookie, A, AA, AAA and Majors. By age 12, everyone is in Majors.

This keeps the late bloomers on the ladder rather than dividing them into "House" and "travel" at age 8.



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Have a program between “House” and elite

Another idea for keeping late bloomers in the game *and* for rewarding players who are serious about soccer but can’t match the elite players’ athleticism.

Ideally, give everyone who wants professional training and evenly matched competition the chance to get it – maybe not every day or every week, but at some point each season.



Goal: Be inclusive!

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Cost | 1. Tailor practices to your team, not vice versa |
| 2. Time | 2. Coaching education ONLINE |
| 3. Parents | 3. Don't push specialization |
| 4. Year-round | 4. Teach positions from Day 1 |
| 5. Win vs. develop | 5. Do programs through schools |
| 6. Fun vs. develop | 6. League play < 90-minute drive |
| 7. Fun vs. structure | 7. Part-time travel, not full time |
| 8. Fun vs. parity | 8. Group by skill level, not age group |
| 9. Develop vs. parity | 9. Have a program between "House" and elite travel |
| 10. Develop ... what? | |
| 11. Track/segregate | |
| 12. Burnout | |

Contact me!

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