

What is Total Player Development?

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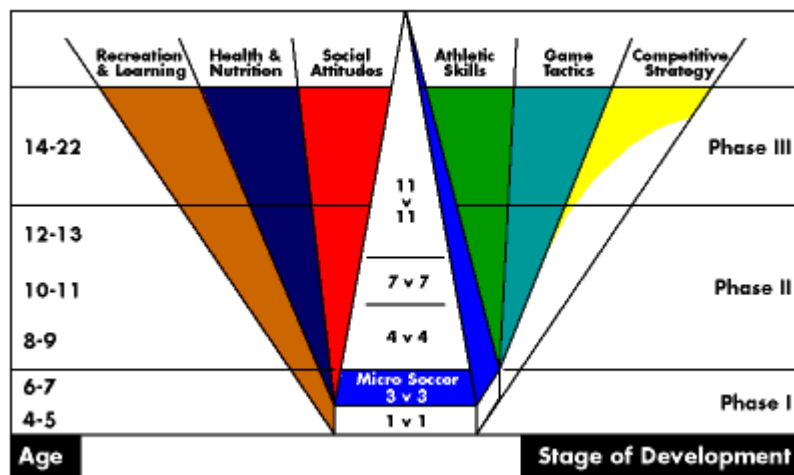
The Program

TPD is a program designed to give every young player the very best soccer experience from the moment they enter the sport to the time they leave youth soccer. The overriding objective is to do everything possible to ensure that children finish their time in youth soccer with only good feelings about the game.

The program has recently been recognized and approved by the Canadian Soccer Association and the rollout of the program in Canada will begin in the spring of 2002. Over the past seven years several Canadian and American clubs have participated in the testing of the program.

Total Player Development looks at the best ways for children to enjoy and grow with the game "at their pace" (taking into consideration their age and their "readiness" in order to ensure that the activities are developmentally appropriate).

"Readiness" is the key to TPD -- when is a child able to begin to develop some of the more complex soccer skills and to understand the more complicated rules, such as offside and the progressive development of "game savvy" and soccer smarts.



The graphic gives an Overview of the 3-Phase program described below.

The left-hand side of the pyramid shows the benefits that come from the holistic approach of the program -- Total Person -- the main purpose of TPD.

The right side of the pyramid looks more at the soccer development opportunities -- Total Player -- in the areas of Athletic Skills, Game Tactics and as time goes on, Competitive Strategy.

The intention of the program is to enhance and/or supplement existing programs and to help start children off in the most positive of soccer environments.

An important feature of the program is the user-friendly packaging of the resource materials and training manuals. This step-by-step program is designed to make it a positive experience for all - club executives, program directors, parents, master coaches - as well as the children.

Overall Philosophy

TPD's principal philosophy in the early years is to avoid competitive, result-oriented play and to delay the onset of the 11 vs. 11 "winning-is-everything" mentality, which brings with it the permanent positioning of players according to their abilities and inabilities!

The program is intended to provide each child with the opportunity for all-around growth and development, within a fun play environment.

Serious 11 vs. 11 competitive play is only recognized as important and necessary after 13-14 years of age (although 11-a-side soccer may have started earlier).

Phase One. Developing a "Love for the Game" (Age 4 to 7)

Phase One is not only the starting place for the program -- it is the most important place! The One-with-One program provides an opportunity for parents to sign their children up at the age of 4.

The One-with-One uses an age-appropriate, child-friendly environment by starting out with fun, non-intimidating activities and games where the parent and child take the child's first steps (kicks) in soccer together. The law is "at least one parent (or a surrogate parent) must accompany and participate with their child." With parent and child starting out as "teammates", it is also a positive situation for the parents, particularly those who have not been exposed to soccer. The program is cooperative not competitive -- One-with-One.

The One-with-One program creates a unique situation for soccer. More traditional North American sports -- baseball, football and basketball -- require a high degree of hand/eye coordination to perform the catching, throwing and in baseball, the striking skills. The One-with-One soccer program, with its greater emphasis on kicking, running and tumbling, is very appropriate for 4- and 5-year-olds. While this may give an initial kickstart to soccer, as we do not recommend specialization in any sport until much later.

Phase One is progressed from One-with-One into the 3 vs. 3 MICRO SOCCER® game, which is conducted Jamboree and Festival fashion with a Master-Coach, assisted by the parents. Results are de-emphasized and the philosophy is that the "Game is the Teacher" with the majority of the program given over to "Play" rather than drills.

Phase Two. Developing a "Love to Learn" (Age 8 to 12)

The years between 8 and 12 have been called the "Golden Age of Learning." This is a time when children have become coordinated and well balanced and want to know more and do more. They are inquisitive, but in a very positive way. Phase Two is the optimum time to develop the skills and to begin to develop the game savvy that will be so important in later soccer years.

Phase Two moves the development game up from MICRO SOCCER® into 4 vs. 4 play (The Fabulous Fours) -- ideally for another two years. And then progresses into Soccer 7's (or Soccer 6's in Canada, i.e., Mini Soccer) for one year, with no offside. The final stage of Phase Three sees the introduction of the Super Sevens game in the second year, during which time the "offside" rule is introduced.

50% of practice time in Phase Two is spent in development games and activities.

Phase Three. Developing a "Love to Compete" (Age 13 and above)

Phase Three is the first time in the TPD program when the competitive aspect of soccer takes on any real importance.

This is the graduation phase -- moving into 11 vs. 11 play. Even then, TPD downplays a result-oriented approach in the early stage of Phase Three. Maximizing abilities and minimizing deficiencies in a team format is the way for a coach to get results. But in doing so it limits the development opportunities of each player as they get positioned according to their strengths and weaknesses. As the "Team" concept becomes

more important, and one team tests itself against another, the coach should be careful not to stifle and stereotype players too early by placing them in permanent field positions.

Nevertheless, this is the age of increasingly competitive play -- Us versus Them!

How Is The TPD Program To Be Implemented?

Our strongest possible recommendation is not to go backwards.

If you have players aged-6 or -7, who have already played a season or more in a larger numbers small-sided program such as 5-a-side or 6-a-side, it will be perceived by many as a regression if you then change to a 3 vs. 3 MICRO SOCCER® program. If you are playing 6-a-side then by all means have the occasional MICRO SOCCER® Jamboree, but reducing numbers from an existing program on a week-by-week basis has always met obstacles.

Rather, start the new intake of beginner players with Phase One - the One-with-One and/or the MICRO SOCCER® (for beginning 6-year olds) -- and let them and their parents grow with the program.

The Phase One materials -- Training Curriculum, Operations Manual, the week-by-week schedule and program, the parent's guides and children's activity books are now ready.

The longer-term program (Phase Two & Three) will be developed and refined as the children move through Phase One and into the 7-plus age groups.

In Phase One, the One-with-One requires an experienced instructor (coach and/or teacher) as the Master Coach. Consideration of a joint-venture with a local Parks and Recreation organization or the Y is recommended. We can supply much more detailed information on the TPD program. Just Email us at tw@worldofsoccer.com.