

The logo of the Alexandria Soccer Association is a shield-shaped emblem. At the top, the word "ALEXANDRIA" is written in a light blue, serif font. The shield is divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant contains a red and white soccer ball. The top-right quadrant features a red lion rampant. The bottom-left quadrant is empty. The bottom-right quadrant contains a red lion passant guardant. The entire shield is outlined in a light blue border.

Alexandria Soccer Association

U9-U18 Curriculum

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Alexandria Soccer Association Curriculum

Introduction

Purpose & Overview

Purpose: The curriculum sets forth explicit technical and tactical training priorities to help achieve uniformity across all of the club's age groups. In addition, it aims to unify all age groups based on a club-wide style of play.

80:20 rule: The 80:20 rule, which applies across many disciplines and industries, states that 80% of results come from 20% of activities performed. With that rule in mind, this curriculum does not attempt to cover and explicitly teach a vast amount of techniques. Instead, it aims to teach a smaller set of skills essential to Alexandria Soccer Association's style of play (see below). As a result, players gain significant repetition, exposure, and ultimately, mastery of technical skills that provide the greatest impact in the game environment.

Sequential & cumulative instruction: The curriculum is both sequential and cumulative in nature. Building upon previously-taught concepts, players graduate and progress to the next phase of the curriculum in a logical and seamless manner. For example, players initially learn how to build play out of the back in order to keep sustained possession of the ball, which provides a foundation for understanding how we build attacks up the field. The curriculum is also cumulative as players learn how to apply essential technical and tactical skills in an increasingly complex way (great number of players, increased speed of play, etc.)

Alexandria Soccer Association's Style of Play

Progressive possession: Progressive possession refers to the intent to dominate games through monopolizing possession of the ball coupled with a "penetration-first" mentality. If there is no chance to penetrate forward upon winning the ball, players and the team as a whole utilize intelligent positioning and ball circulation to create openings to attack.

Defensive Pressure: Upon losing possession, players must demonstrate a quick mental transition and show willingness to perform short bursts of individual and group pressure to win the ball back as soon as possible. If the ball cannot be won back immediately, the team defends from the front in order to make play predictable and force play into predetermined pressing zones.

Training Priorities & Progressions

Technical Training: From the earliest ages, players gain significant repetitions of technical skills required to play our possession-oriented style of play. Our approach of focusing on the technical skills that are most applicable to our style of play affords players with enough time and repetition to develop mastery. We strongly believe that our technical focus will develop players that are valued in any system and level of play.

- Instilling correct habits through muscle memory: The U9-U12 age groups are often considered the “golden age of learning”. During this time period, players gain the ability to learn and perform more complex and mental tasks. Therefore, we pay close attention and give frequent feedback so players learn to execute technical skills efficiently and correctly from the very beginning.
- Mastering the basics to unlock creativity: Once players master the basic technical requirements of our style of play, it provides them increased freedom to express their creativity with the ball. As players forge correct habits into muscle memory, a player’s brain devotes less and less cognitive resources on basic skills, which allows them to expend more mental energy to solving soccer situations on the field.

Tactical Training: An attractive, team-based possession game does not occur without proper tactical training. Similar to our technical training, we start to teach proper decision-making based on position-specific visual cues on the field. The tactical terminology and concepts are similar across age groups, which makes the transition from 7v7, 8v8, and eventually 11v11 easier.

- Teaching position-specific visual cues: During a match, a player will spend 90%+ of the game without the ball. Therefore, teaching players how, where, when, and why to move into specific spaces on the field at the right time is vital. In addition, proper movement off the ball is an essential component for sustaining possession during the game.
- Proper decision-making on the ball: In a game, you can separate the technical and tactical sides of the game. A player must make a decision with the ball before applying the necessary technique. Therefore, we use common terminology across age groups to guide their decision-making on the ball and embed field awareness into all our training.

Physical/Mental Training: Our curriculum reflects the latest trends and research in soccer conditioning best practices. We place all physical and mental training in the game context.

- Interval Training: Soccer is a game of variable and constantly changing speed and direction. Recent studies show that soccer players engage in short bursts of activity (20-50 yards or 2-6 seconds) rather than maintaining a constant speed throughout a game. In training, coaches can manipulate work-to-rest ratios to maintain a high-level of intensity to build the soccer-specific conditioning required in the game environment.

- Global Training Method: We strive to create efficient and effective training sessions and activities that challenge the four areas of a player's performance (technical, tactical, physical, mental) and incorporate as many attacking, defending, and transition elements as possible. As a result, players learn to train and strengthen each area of performance in game context.

Phase Progression: In addition to teaching player age-appropriate content, the club prioritizes teaching our curriculum content to mastery. Therefore, we allow our coaches to customize their instruction based on their players' current ability level and competency with taught material. We structure our curriculum based on "phases", which strategically delivers content to players in a understandable manner.

- Playing out of the Back: The ability to sustain possession begins with the GK and the defensive unit. We appreciate and encourage players to keep possession and build play out our defensive third. The expectation is that our younger teams will make mistakes; however, as players gain years of experience in our playing method, we expect more consistent game execution.
- Individual & Group Defending: As part of our stated playing style, we encourage players to win the ball back as soon as it is lost. We teach visual cues as triggers regarding when and how to close space as individuals and as a organized group.
- Individual & Group Attacking: Keeping possession of the ball is a means to an end, not the end itself. We continually teach players how to prioritize their playing options so they can determine when and where to attack forward. In addition, our teams learn specific visual cues that allows individual and a group of players to respond appropriately in the flow of the game.

