

THE COACHING MANUAL

NEW COACHES STARTER PACK

Advice, guides, session plans, content, opportunities to progress, and more from the world's best digital soccer coaching platform.



INTRODUCTION

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Coaching is about helping young players to develop and reach their potential, but it's also a personal journey of growth for the coach.

Among the advice I have for new coaches is this: you will make mistakes. You'll try things that don't work. You'll make the wrong decision either in training or in a match - probably both. It's all part of the game, and the way to grow is to learn what, why, and how things went wrong. That's why we've put a section about reflection in this guide.

It's not only you who will make mistakes, your players are human too. Another piece of advice I have would be to be patient with your players. You will have to repeat yourself a lot, and probably repeat whole sessions time after time until they get it. Sometimes your players won't understand what you're asking them to do - especially as you're just starting out and finding your feet with the communication side of things.

Like many vocations, the way to improve as a coach is to soak up as much knowledge as possible, mainly from those who have been in the game longer than yourself. In times gone by, this would be done by pressing your nose up against the gates at a professional club's training ground, notepad in hand, observing a session with the first team. But times have changed, and it's not as easy to pick the brains of the best coaches.

That's why we do what we do at The Coaching Manual. We've created (and curated) a massive library of content from a wide range of highly qualified and vastly experienced coaches, so that you can feed off their wisdom. It's even better than being a fly on the wall at Cobham, Melwood or La Masia, because we break each training session and practice down into easy-to-understand diagrams, animations, and even interviews. It's like having some of the world's top coaches as your own mentors.

There's also content specifically designed for players, and even parents. Sharing session content is absolutely priceless, not only for improving the understanding and efficiency of your training sessions, but also for maintaining the most important relationships you have as a coach. There's a lot more to coaching than putting out some cones and hoping for the best.



The Coaching Manual helps coaches of all levels of ability, especially new coaches starting out and finding their feet. Picking up that whistle for the first time is scary, there's no getting round it. But by using the resources we've made available to you, you will hit the ground running.

No one starts out with all the answers. Everybody makes mistakes. We've put this New Coaches Starter Pack together to help you make the most out of every situation that coaching presents, to help you support your players as they work towards their potential, and, just as importantly, to provide you with the fundamental understanding that you need in order to embark on your own journey of development as a coach.

Coaching is an extremely rewarding pursuit for many reasons, not just because of the role you will play in players' lives. It is rewarding in itself: you will see yourself get better with experience, you will overcome adversity, and you will learn a lot about yourself along the way.

I'm delighted you've decided to embark on this journey - you won't regret it.

Paul Bright,
Technical Director,
The Coaching Manual

The Coaching Manual's Technical Director Paul Bright is a UEFA A Licence and USSF A Licence Coach, and a Coach Educator for various National Federations.

Paul has over 20 years' coaching experience in English Premier League academies, and Youth Programs in the USA.

He has coached at Manchester United and LA Galaxy, and is also the Technical Director for AYSO United in the USA.



RUNNING YOUR FIRST SESSION

RUNNING YOUR FIRST SESSION

You know more than you think you know

Most people who volunteer to be coaches in the grassroots football game are parents of (at least) one of the players in the team. The volunteer coach is and always has been, the lifeblood of the grassroots game. The good news is that, if you are a parent, then you already have the major part of the skillset required to coach children.

At The Coaching Manual, we think that 70% of being a coach is being able to build that rapport with children, knowing when to provide support and knowing when they need a bit more discipline. They're all skills you have to develop as a parent. The Coaching Manual can provide all the information you will ever need about actually coaching football, it's what we're the best at.



Equipment checklist

-  Balls ✓
-  Cones/Markers ✓
-  Bibs ✓
-  Appropriate clothing ✓
-  Appropriate footwear ✓
-  Whistle ✓
-  Stopwatch ✓
-  Tactics board ✓



RUNNING YOUR FIRST SESSION

“The biggest mistake rookie coaches make is trying to emulate the superstars in the professional game”

Picking the right session

We have one word for you - Simplicity.

The biggest mistake rookie coaches make when starting out is trying to emulate the superstars in the professional game. Remember, that those players have had all the building blocks in place for a long time, so they are capable of performing amazing things. Your players aren't.

Instead, if you (and your players) are just starting out, think of the process as like learning to read. First and foremost, you have to teach them the alphabet and then you progress from there. It takes a long time, but perseverance and presenting the right challenge to your players will reap amazing rewards.

Quick wins (But quickly doesn't win)

Take it slow. Don't put yourself under pressure to expect a lot of success when you start out. It's about setting the standards, setting the template that you will stick to for the rest of your coaching journey. Keep an eye out for other pieces of content that we can provide you with.



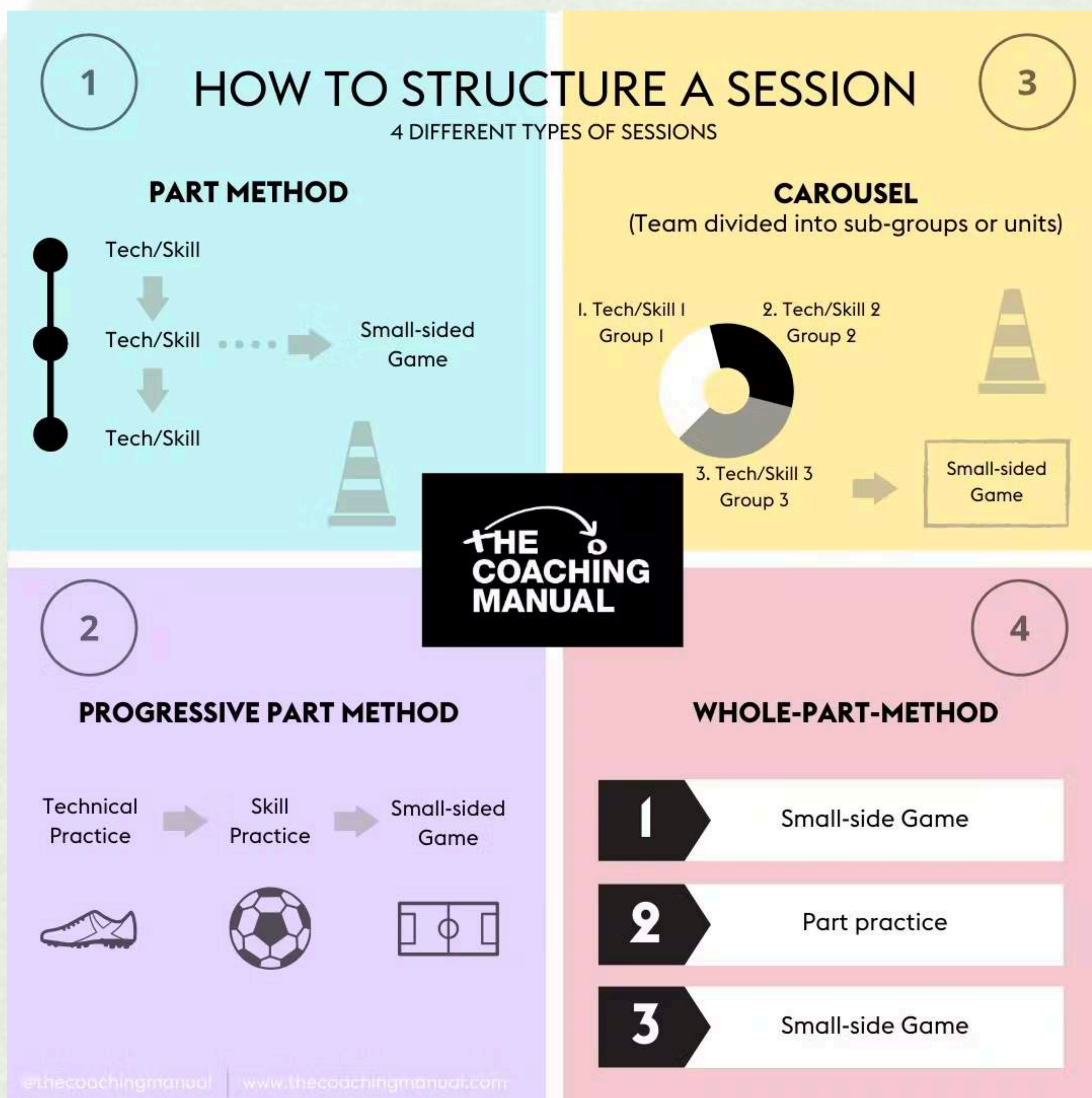
RUNNING YOUR FIRST SESSION

How to Structure a Session

The following things need to be considered when deciding what needs to be included in a coaching session:
Clear session objectives:

- Key Coaching points
- Your coaching style
- Start Point
- Does it look and feel like a game?
- Numbers? Even Numbers, over, underloads, floaters?
- Rules? How do they affect the session?
- Decision making for players
- Opportunities to problem solve
- Fun, engaging and develop a life-long love for the Sport

You should also decide upon which type of session you need to structure, the infographic below highlights four different ones to be considered. Learn more about the planning and structure of a training session in [this webinar](#).



RUNNING YOUR FIRST SESSION

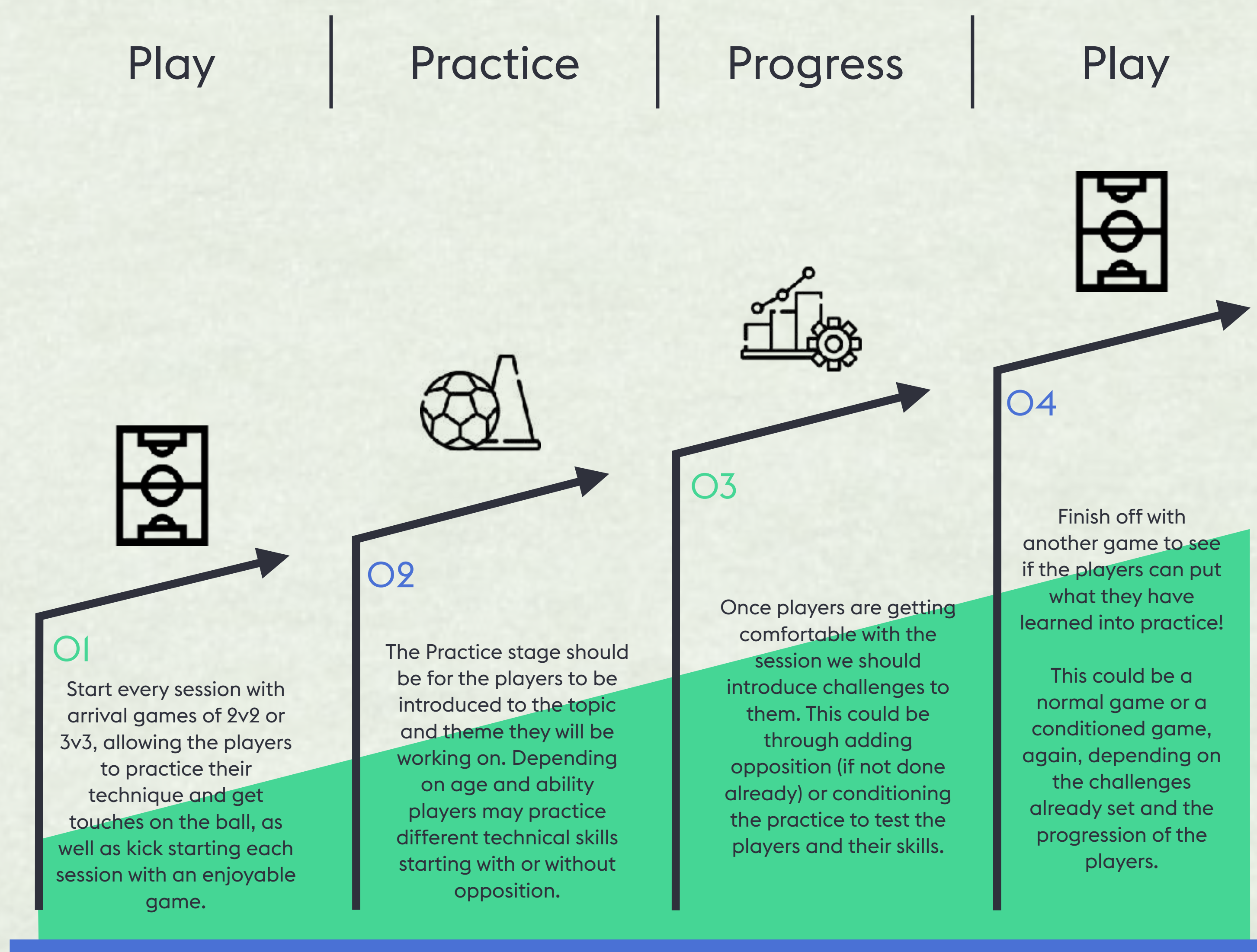
Play - Practice - Progress - Play

Play-Practice-Progress-Play is The Coaching Manual's philosophy based around the traditional grassroots Play-Practice-Play player-centered approach to coaching.

This model places the needs and motivations of the player at the forefront of a coach's approach to coaching their players.

The concept of Play-Practice-Progress-Play is to allow young players to experience the game and game-like situations as much as possible.

This approach differs from traditional practices that may have children standing in lines, running laps and participating in drills that don't resemble the game of soccer.



RUNNING YOUR FIRST SESSION

Suggested first sessions

The Coaching Manual features a host of session content on its platform, some of which are featured below.

Click the image on each session to learn more.

Ball Mastery Warm Up



This is entry level stuff and it's why your players need a ball each. This will help them get loads of touches on the ball.

Why not introduce them to TopTekkers, where they can learn the moves on their own. Spend 10-15 Minutes on this activity.

Dribbling and Ball Manipulation Warm Up



Interference forces your players to get their head up.

Try and encourage them to keep control of the ball and not go too fast. Spend 10-15 minutes on this activity.

Ball Mastery and Dribbling Technical Practice



Try and get your players to focus on keeping control of the ball and help them recognise when they can try to go through a gap.

Ball Mastery Game



Don't worry about 1 big goal and 2 small goals. just try to work with 2 small goals if you can.

It means that you don't need a goalkeeper (don't specialise with younger players).

Give them a point if they pull of a skill they've been working on and 2 points for a goal.

SETTING UP YOUR FIRST SESSION

Preparation

“Fail to prepare, prepare to fail” is a quote that is used often and is very true when planning your football sessions. One thing that we often concentrate on are the coaching points and details of a session that a coach wants to say, however, we often neglect the equipment needed and in what area we are working. The session can often have negative outcomes when we don't think about these things. Preparing what is needed and what you are working with will enhance your ability to step up quickly to begin your session.

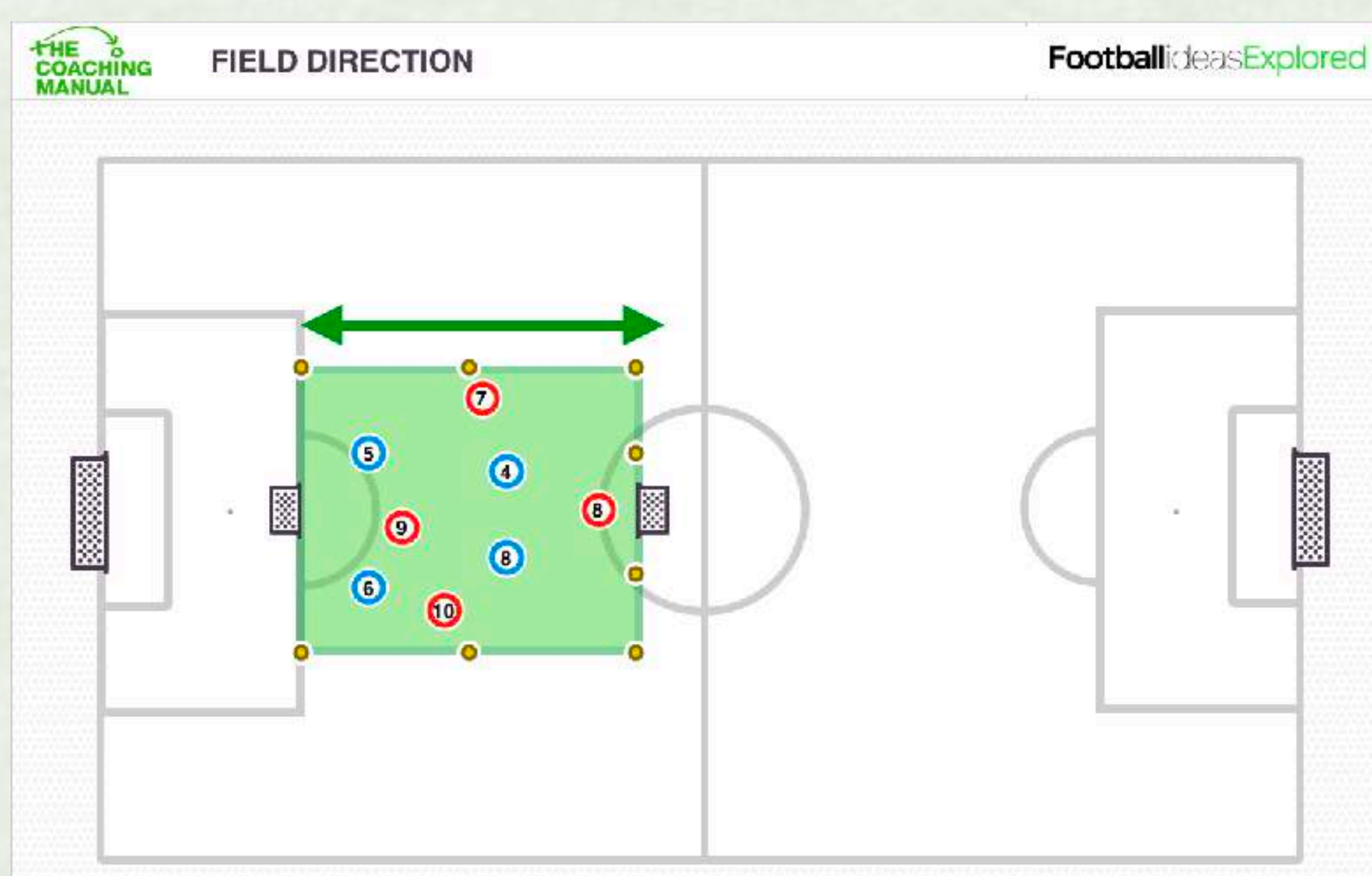


The pitch

Football fields are always the same, an area with 2 goals at either end. Nevertheless, pitch diameters can change depending on the age group, or the area you have been allocated. Here, we will concentrate on a team that has half a pitch to work with, as it is probably the most common environment we work in. However, these tips can work for any area or age group you work with.

The shape of your exercises should always try to be rectangular. That is not to say that trying new shapes to test players and try new things are bad, because they are not. But always try to work on the shape of the field in a real game, which is ultimately rectangle.

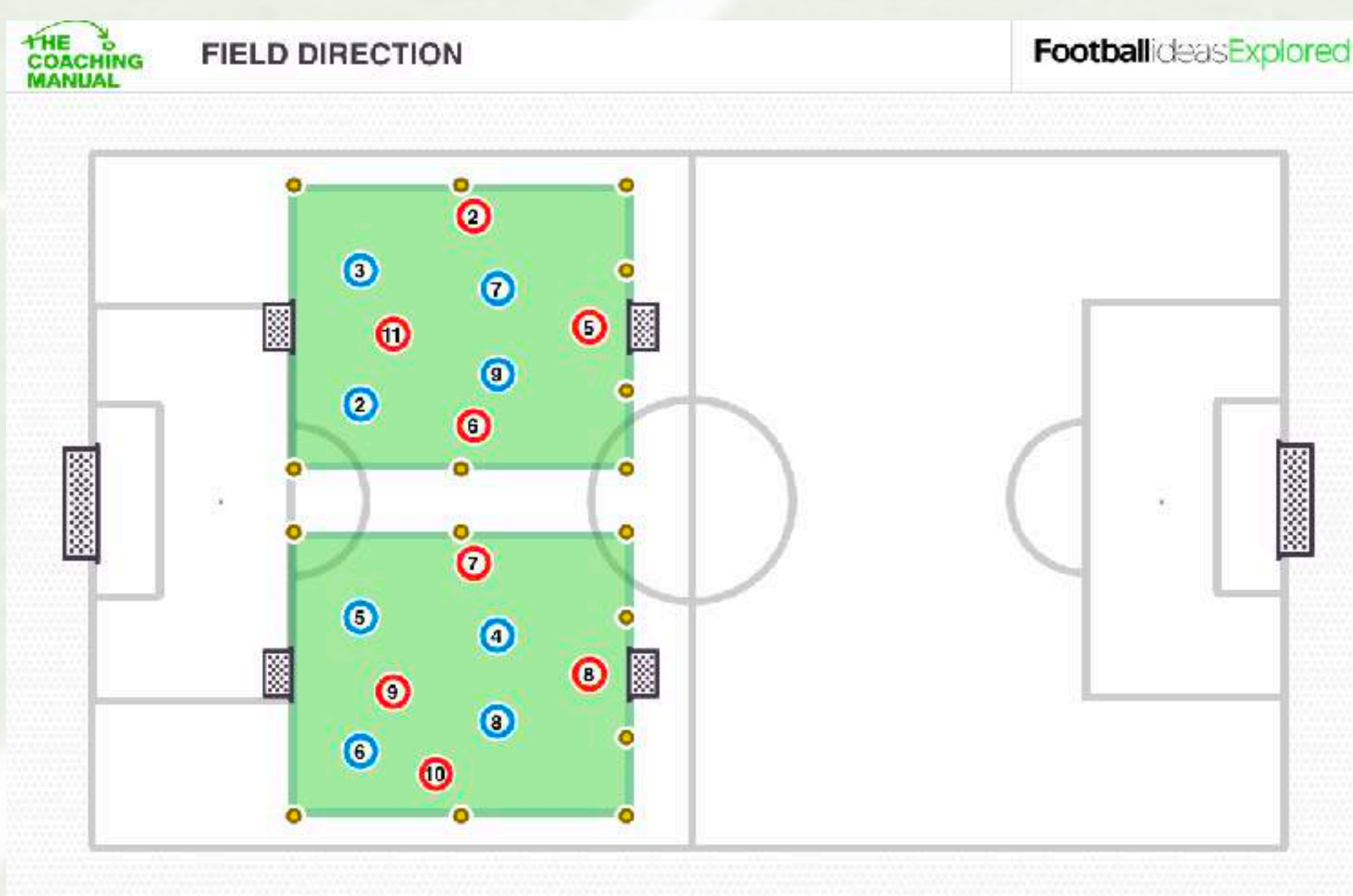
Where possible one should always try to work in the direction of the game. With attacking teams always towards a big goal and defending teams always away from the goal.



As we can see in the image (left), even though the players are in a Small Sided Game they are still working in the direction of a real life game, vertically not horizontally. However some pitches have small sided goals on the side lines for you to use, again they are great to use as it has a ready made field but where possible try to use the natural direction of the field.

On average we can normally get two pitches in half a pitch, this is also the case for a third of a pitch depending on the original size of the full pitch and also your small sided game pitches.

SETTING UP YOUR FIRST SESSION



Sometimes this not possible as too many players, or your activities, won't allow this pitch size for smaller games. If, for example, we are playing 3v3 and then wanting to open it to a 6v6, we can use pitches within pitches to counter this problem.

One thing that you should consider when setting up your sessions is for specific players. If you are doing player specific exercises, and also attack vs defensive style practices, you need to consider the areas where these players play and are most active. It sounds really simple, but this often gets lost in just being an "area".

For example, if you are working with a winger or overlapping full back, it doesn't make sense to work with them in the centre of the field as it is unrealistic. The same as if you were working with an attacking team, you wouldn't work away from the goal. Direction and pitch references are vital when working out how to set up your session.



This is one of the most efficient and easiest ways to set up. It is quick and easy to organise and also cuts down time for the transition from 3v3 games/ technical or skill practices to the bigger game 6v6 or 9v9, as you just take out the small goals and pitches when necessary, to leave you with the bigger pitch.

SETTING UP YOUR FIRST SESSION



Left are some examples of how this could look for some specific positions. No doubt there are many more, but first you have to consider; What is the theme? What am I looking to get out of my player or team? What part of the field would they do it? And; how can I create my set up to help the players understand better?

When thinking about the size of the area consider the ability of your players and how difficult/easy the activity may be. It is always better to start with a slightly bigger pitch than a smaller one. The reason being is that it encourages success immediately as it is a bigger space to work in. If the players find it too easy, then you can make the area smaller to challenge the players creating positive reinforcement; "you are really good, let's make it more difficult for you." Smaller to bigger, can create negative outcomes which can diminish the performance of players, almost saying "you are not good enough on a small pitch let's open it up".

SETTING UP YOUR FIRST SESSION

Cones and bibs (and others)

Organising the cones and bibs by colour is one way you will save a lot of time. We generally want our areas or activity zones to have the same colour, but if the bag is full odd colours on top of each other, it can be frustrating to separate them and not have them to hand when needed and also wastes time, time that could be spent with your players on more productive matters. Keeping your cones colour coordinated is a really simple and easy way to save time in your set up.

In regards to the layout of cones. One thing you should try to avoid are "runways". This means too many cones on one line of the pitch or area. For example, this would be a line of 30 yards with a cone every 5 yards (7 cones). One, it wastes cones and two it wastes time. A good tip is to put a cone down every 10 yards, so a line of 30 yards should have 4 cones. Two of those cones will act as corners if you are creating a pitch. But if the pitch is 35 yards, what do we do? If the pitch is an odd number, one should always add one cone more than the "rounded number" for example 35 yard line would have 5 cones. Then just divide the distance by the number of cones. So this example would be a cone every 7 yards.



Bibs are generally allocated to one bag, even in professional clubs. This is often a pain as we pull out one colour and there are 2 other colours stuck inside the original bib. One way of countering this is to have separate smaller bags for the bigger bag for the each individual colour. However, another way is to tie the bibs in a loose knot so the don't get tangled together. This allows them to be a bit more separate in the bag to be able to take them out easier.

With the allocation of bibs, you can do this a few ways. Lay them on the floor in the positions that the players will occupy on the pitch, this is a good way for players to see the formation and the set up of how they may play. Another good idea is to incorporate them in the warm up or by simple asking them to get in pairs with players who have a similar position to each other and give them a number 1 and 2 (or more if you require multiple bibs) and then get their designated colour according to the number (1 reds, 2 blues). If you are creating a game with floaters/magic man/free man/jokers, it would be good practice to always give these bibs to them first.

Depending on your time constraint, try to keep equipment to a minimum. It is great to have poles and mannequins, but often the time for the set up doesn't allow you to use them.

SETTING UP YOUR FIRST SESSION

Visuals

It is important to think about the learning styles of players when considering your preparation for a set up. Visuals are an excellent way of helping players understand the task to execute on the field. A great visual is a tablet or if you don't have that a tactics board. A tablet gives a clear understanding of how you can manipulate individual movement of players or instruct what you want to happen and also give examples if you have access to video.

The tactics board can do the same the same but in a manual situation (and not having access to video content for examples). If you don't have access to this equipment, you can also use cones. If you are using cones, where possible use the same colours as the bibs and also the same direction as your exercise.

Setting up

Most of the things that have been mentioned are in regards to the preparation and consideration of your set ups. However, what about when you actually get to the field?

For a lot of grassroots clubs, the team shares a pitch with other teams before and after your session. This cuts down the time you can use for setting up by a significant amount, to zero in some cases. Here are a few tips to help.

On time

Where you can you need to arrive early and set up as early as possible if the pitch is available. A recommended time to arrive could be 30 minutes before the session starts. This gives the coach the opportunity to check the equipment and set up, but also visualise what will happen in the session (the coaching points) and in the transitions. If your pitch isn't available you still need to arrive early, 20 minutes before would be a good idea.

It is also always better to be there before players so you can welcome them. Obviously for grassroots coaches, it can be difficult due to work commitments, We would suggest getting there as early as possible but be prepared to start immediately.



SETTING UP YOUR FIRST SESSION

Player involvement

If it is this case that you can't get on the field before your allocated time, you need to be quick in your set up but also accurate. Clearly, if there are 2 coaches this is easier to manage. One can be with the players the other setting up. If you're alone however, this can be a little trickier. A good way of getting around this is to allow your players to play a small game inside a designated area. The players need to self manage this and you can supervisor from a far and check on them from time to time until you have finished the set up.

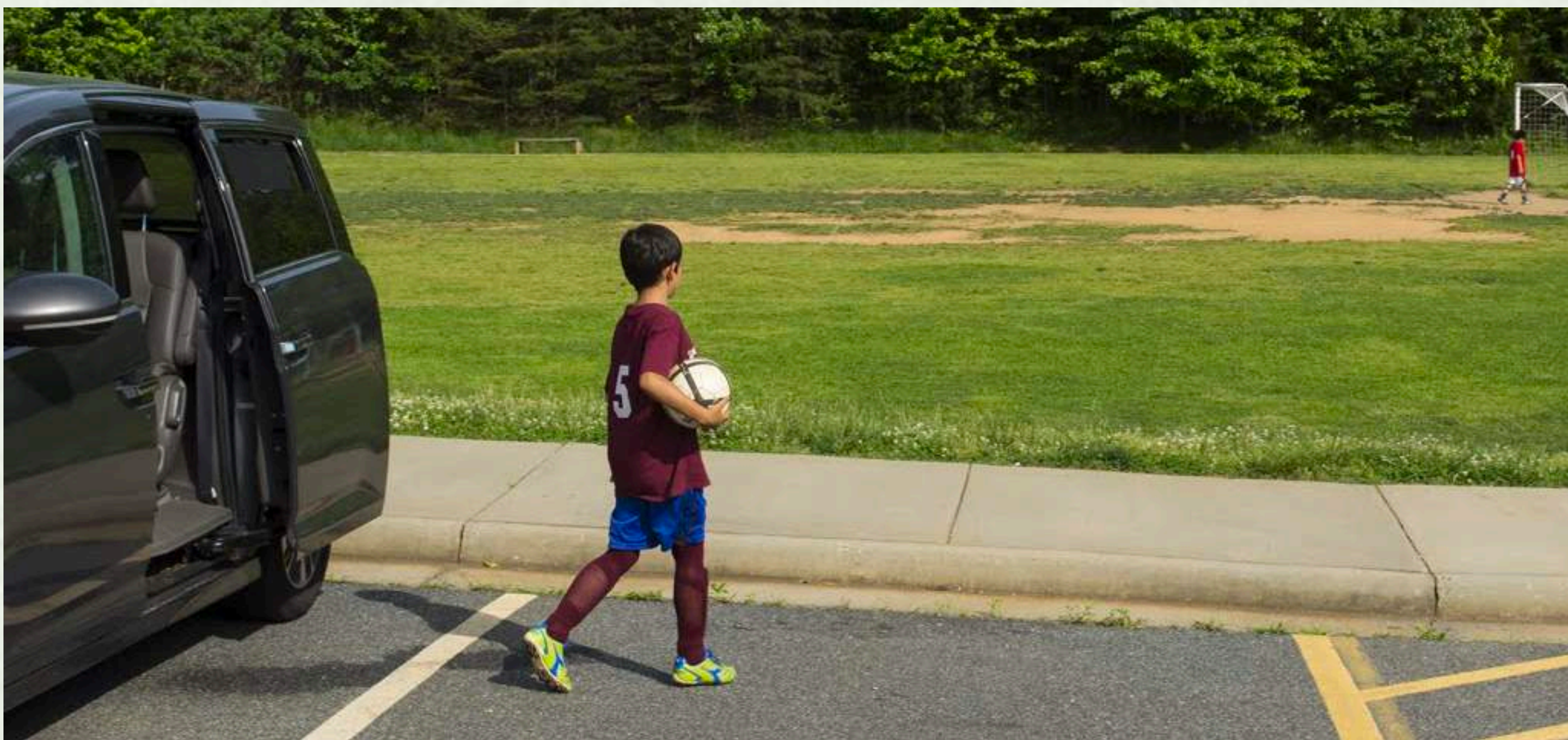
This is a great way of keeping players occupied. Another way could be for your captain to lead a warm up with balls. They can take them through some dynamic stretches (if necessary) and different types of passes. We can also ask players to design 10 minutes sessions. Allowing the players to do this gives them autonomy to design something they like and gives them responsibility in a group. However, with this one should always limit their equipment, for example to 4-6 cones and 2 balls, and see what they can come up with. Giving players the opportunity to work by themselves, gives you the time to set up correctly without mistakes, whilst give autonomy and trust to players.



After the session...

The next session set up always begins after your last practice. As a coach it is pivotal that you put away the equipment correctly so that the next session is just as easy to manage. We would also recommend getting the players to help, collect cones (in colour order), bibs (in a loose knot) and also the balls and any other equipment you may be using. A great way of remembering this is 'leave it how you found it'.

Setting up can sometimes be harder than we anticipate. Whether it is not enough time to do so or the inconvenience of incorrect equipment, we always have to keep things to a minimum. Always try to set up quickly and effectively, and this will only come with understanding what is needed for your sessions in your preparation stage. When thinking about the set always try to come back to "does it look like the game?".



THE IMPORTANCE OF WARM UPS

THE IMPORTANCE OF WARM UPS

Warming up is vital as it raises the heartbeat, gets the blood pumping around the body to the relevant muscles and helps to loosen the joints for mobility.

It also provides the coach with an opportunity to get their players tactically prepared for what lies ahead in the training session or how they want to play in a game.

Warm Ups also help players to mentally prepare for the match, get focused, get a feel for the ball and the conditions of the pitch and the day.

Check out the following guides which can help you to run Warm Ups effectively with your players:

- [A Guide To Warm Ups](#)
- [10 FREE Warm Ups](#)

Cooling Down

It is quite common that players and teams don't cool down after a game or training session, but it is really important that they do. Cooling down helps to reduce the heart rate back to a normal level at a safe rate and it also helps to speed up recovery time.

Getting into a routine of regularly cooling down is great practice and as players do this they can make time for reflection on how they performed in the game or to think about what they learned in the training session.




Useful practices for Cooling Down:

- Gentle jogging or running around the pitch a couple of times to bring down the heart rate.
- Static stretches to reduce soreness and release any lactic acid build-up.





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Warm up

Why?

-  Prevent injury
-  Gets you focused on the game
-  Increase Heart Rate

How I Warm Up!

-  **INCREASE HEART RATE**
I increase my heart rate through running and playing fun games. 
-  **STRETCHING**
Did you know, stretching is important because it reduces the risk of injury!
-  **FOCUSING**
I like to think about all of the great things I am going to do in the game ahead.

THE COACHING MANUAL

Cool Down

Why?

-  Think about your game
-  Speeds up recovery
-  Decrease Heart Rate

How I Cool Down!

-  **DECREASE HEART RATE**
I reduce my heart rate by slow running and walking. 
-  **THINK ABOUT YOUR GAME**
Give yourself time to think about how you performed in the game.
-  **SPEED UP RECOVERY**
Use static stretching to reduce soreness in your muscles.

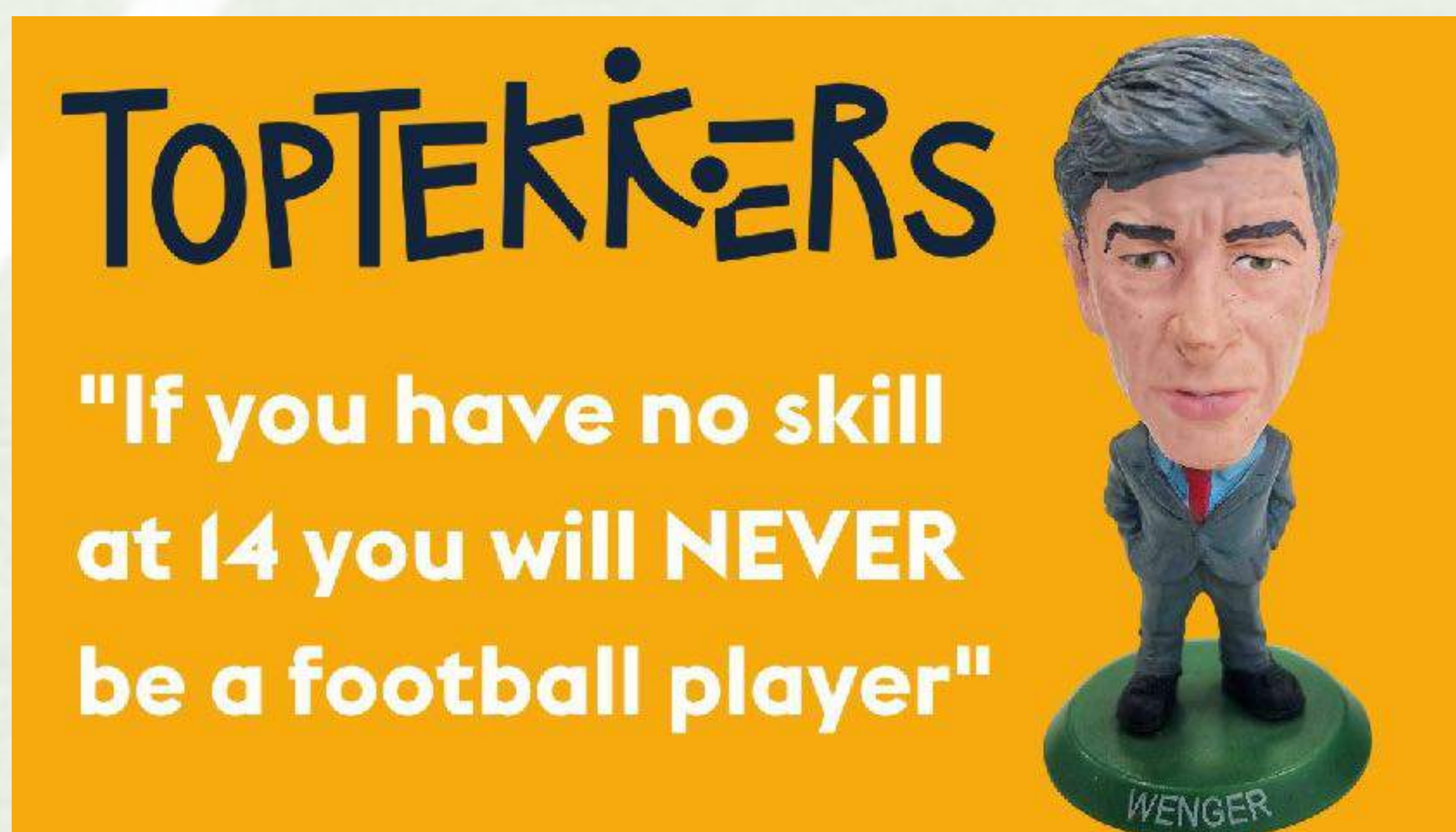
TECHNICAL PRACTICE

TECHNICAL PRACTICE

The importance of technical practice and how we can help

Fundamental technical skills must be acquired by a player's teenage years - if not, the likelihood of the athlete progressing into elite sport is unlikely.

Most professional coaches agree that it is vital for youth athletes to develop the fundamental motor skills and sport-specific fundamentals between ages 8-12.



Former Arsenal manager Arsène Wenger said "It's very simple.

You build a player like you build a house. You start with the foundations. The fundamentals.

The basis of a player is the technique.

If you don't have technical ability at 14 you can forget it, you will never be a football player."

However, due to limited practice time available to coaches working with children in this age range, time spent on individual skill acquisition and deliberate practice may be limited, as small-sided games are preferred to develop technical skills, because they cover tactical and physiological skills too, and are seen as a more economic use of session time.

This highlights the need to introduce Individual Development Plans on and off the field.

Creating Individual Development Plans tailored to the individual is essential to their development of weaknesses as well as further developing their strengths.



The Coaching Manual has developed the TopTekkers app to give coaches the functionality they need to design, assign, and monitor the individual training plans of their players, and give players the structure they need to efficiently practise away from the training field.

With TopTekkers, coaches can assign techniques to their players, who will log in and be presented with easy-to-follow directions, with video tutorials featuring age-appropriate children. The players complete challenges and are awarded with digital trophies, giving coaches sight of their progression.

TECHNICAL PRACTICE

91% of children enjoy
TOPTEKKERS



Within the Elite Player Performance Plan, used in the UK, it is compulsory for clubs to design and monitor Individual Development Plans for players, where progress is recorded in the individual player's performance clock.

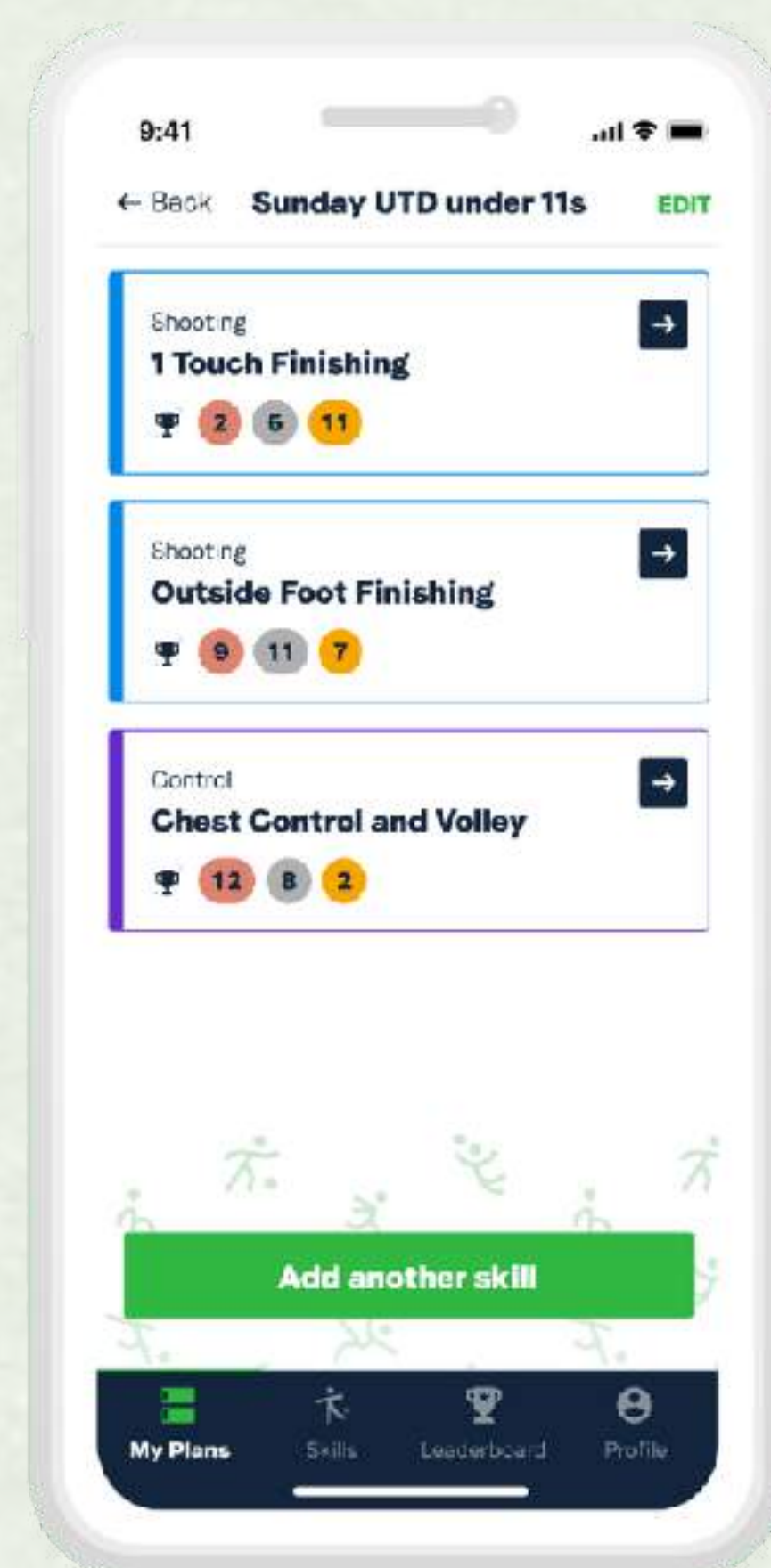
Individual plans are discussed around two to three times a year (based on the age group of the player) in meetings where the coach will discuss the IDP with the athlete and parent, discussing short and long term goals.

Research suggests that the most successful soccer clubs include such Individual Development Plans for players, as well as tailored discussions with individual players before, during, and after training sessions and match days.

Among the elite clubs in the UK that use TopTekkers to assign and monitor their Individual Development Plans are Burnley and Sheffield United, as well as Chicago Fire in MLS.

Jack Lester, Head of Academy at Sheffield United, said: "TopTekkers is simple, fun, and gives ownership of the game back to children, whilst providing our coaches with amazing insight into the practice habits of our youngest players."

Children love using the app too. A recent survey revealed that more than 91% of children enjoy completing the challenges on TopTekkers.



"TopTekkers is simple, fun, and gives ownership of the game back to children, whilst providing our coaches with amazing insight into the practice habits of our youngest players."



Jack Lester - Head of Academy, Sheffield United

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

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“It simply wouldn't be possible for a player to reach a competent standard in soccer with the structured hours afforded to them on the training field”

The time a coach gets to work with their players is so valuable and, in most cases, very limited.

Contact time can vary, some clubs will train twice a week at 1 hour and 30 minutes per session, whereas some clubs only train once a week for one hour.

The graphic below shows how much time a coach can realistically train their players through an average season.

The famous 10,000 hour rule for mastering a skill has largely been debunked, but let's take 2,000 hours as a very low estimate on how long it takes to become competent in any given activity.

As you can see from the graphic, it simply wouldn't be possible for a player to reach such a standard in soccer with the structured hours afforded to them on the training field.

The conclusion is simple: they must work on their technical ability in their own time.



Becoming technically competent at a young age is beneficial for both the coaches and the players. Firstly, and rather obviously, the player's overall ability improves, which helps to enhance their enjoyment and performance levels in games and training.

Secondly, the whole team's training experience is improved as players will benefit from their teammates being more technically able. For instance, if a player attempts a 1-2 with a teammate, they will be more confident that they will receive the return pass.

Thirdly, if a small number of players in the team are technically incompetent it can hinder the flow of the session.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS



Finally, if players already have a good level of technical ability, it allows the coach to use their valuable/limited time to incorporate more expansive practices to improve their players' ability and refine these basic technical skills.. Based on the calculations in the graphic above, and assuming that players don't train whatsoever away from training, it would take a player who trains twice a week (for 1 hour and 30 minutes per session) roughly 24 years to reach a technically competent level.

Regardless of how much you agree with the theory behind these numbers, it does provide the suggestion that it's unattainable to think that every player in a team will reach that level of technical ability at a young age by just practising at the training ground. More is needed.

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are the answer.

Even just the sight of those three words may put off some grassroots coaches. However, the benefits of players practising at home, away from training can't be understated.

They can allow players to:

- Focus on improving weaker aspects of their skillset
- Maintain a level of physical fitness
- Become technically competent
- Have their development tailored by their coach

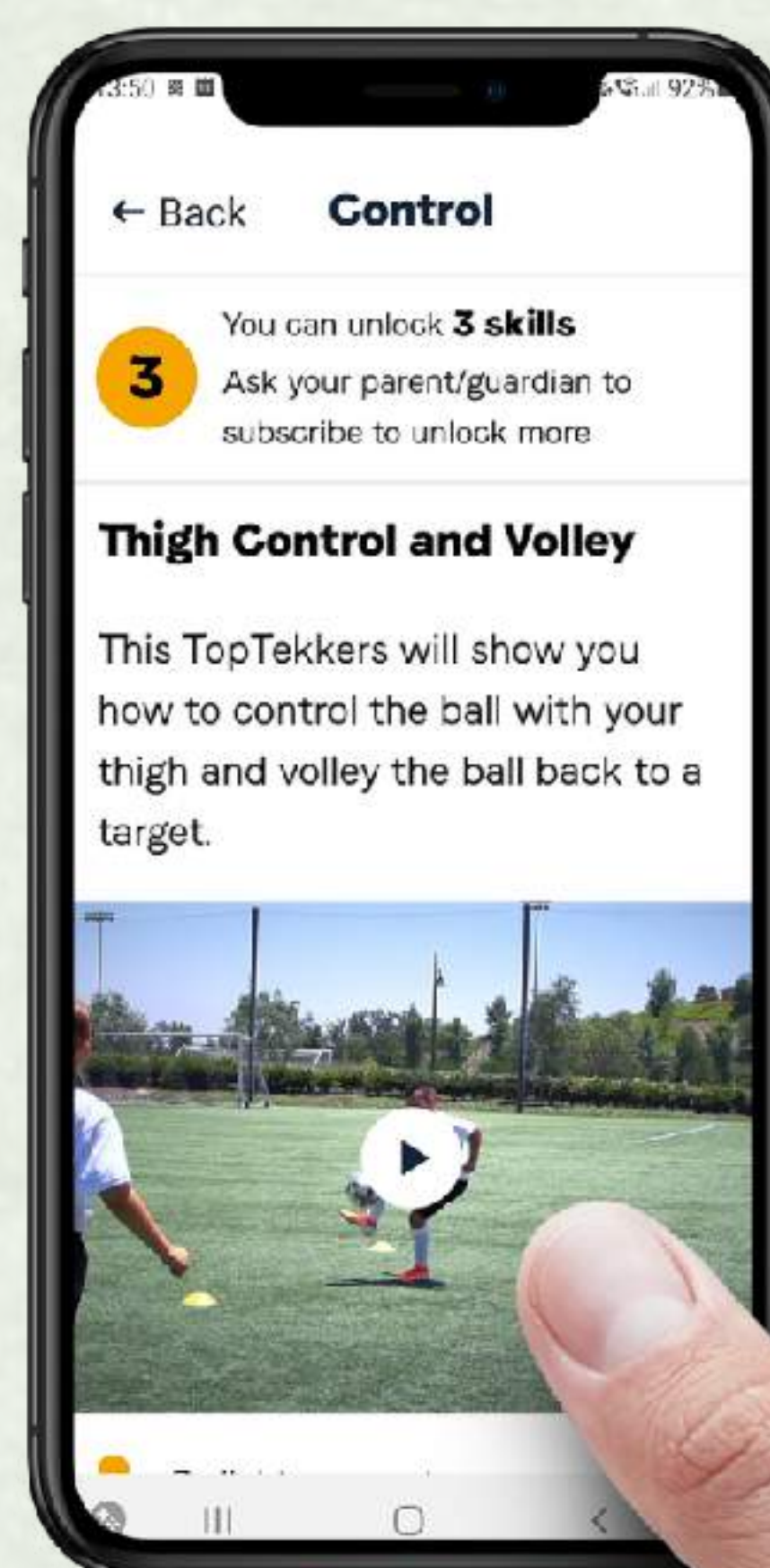
For a grassroots coach, it may seem unnecessary, too time-consuming, or out of their price range to apply these plans at that level. However, TopTekkers possesses certain features which make IDPs more attainable for coaches at all levels.

The main worry for a coach is that they simply don't have the time to be creating individual plans for each of their players. It's often the case that coaches are parents who volunteer and dedicate the little spare time they have to plan and run sessions each week.

Hence, creating detailed IDPs for every player is unrealistic. TopTekkers, however, provides a solution. Individual Development Plans can be created for players within 60 seconds, which can then be tweaked further down the line dependent on each player's level of development.

In addition, coaches are able to monitor how much or how little each player is doing of their own accord. Also, the visually-pleasing development graphs show which aspects of their game the players are working on the most.

If coaches open the door to these IDPs, the required level of technical ability and practise time seems much more achievable.



PLAYER RELATIONSHIPS

PLAYER RELATIONSHIPS

Over time players and coaches should start to develop a positive bond with one another which in turn builds a level of trust. Players can start to be more open and honest with their coach when it comes to their football. Whether that's their level of form, what the coach expects of them or even trying to understand certain decisions the coach has made e.g why the player didn't start the last game.

As this trust builds the player should come to know that the coach has their best intentions at heart and therefore will become more responsive to detail delivered by their coach and give their all on the pitch.

Useful practices to develop and maintain these relationships:

Communication - Being open and honest with players in terms of what you expect with their behaviour, commitment levels etc can be good practice as players then know where they stand.

Good parent relationships - Maintaining positive relationships with the parents of players is key and not just for keeping up good relationships with players.

If parents know you are doing a good job and are helping their child to develop they will encourage their child to behave properly and try their best.

Check out this handy guide on [The Coaching Manual](#) on ways in which coaches can sustain good contact with parents.



“Create a healthy and positive footballing environment for the players to thrive and develop in”

Motivation - If players are consistently motivated they will continue to put in maximum effort at training and in matches. It's also important for coaches to show their high effort levels to set an example to their players and keep them motivated.

This should create a healthy and positive footballing environment for the players to thrive and develop in.

Success on the pitch - A good level of technical and tactical coaching on the training field should yield some form of success on a game day.

Success can mean different things for different teams and coaches as explained in this [article](#), but whatever it is this can naturally build positive relationships between a player and a coach.

PLAYER MOTIVATION

Young players are more motivated with confidence, but how do we keep them motivated and confident?

We all know that young players today are different from previous generations - they are growing up in a world full of distractions, with quick-fix entertainment just one reach-into-their-pocket away. This makes motivation harder to instil than ever - so how do we do it?

Technical development and how we motivate children

Players must be motivated to perform the tasks we are asking them to perform on the pitch, and - more importantly - of their own volition away from the pitch. Breeding these good habits comes from players feeling confident in their abilities. If confidence is key, the challenge then is to create a feeling of confidence in every player, which is difficult because everyone is at different levels of development. If you're working with children with a limited or basic level of technical ability, there is no point asking them to do something that is too complicated for them. They will lose confidence as quickly as a child performing a task that is far below their level of technical ability will lose interest.

For instance, at under-6 or under-7 level soccer, the vast majority of players will have a very limited level of technical ability. There may be one or two players who stand out as particularly good at that level, but 99 times out of 100 they are self-motivated players who practise every day regardless of outside influence.

CONFIDENCE = PRACTICE + SUCCESS

By giving children activities in which they can see their own progression, and from which they can see success, we start to build confidence. Simply put, confidence is generated by people who practice something, and have success at it. How do we create this confidence?

It's really hard to create people who are self motivated, but if we combine a structure with some objectives, give children some praise, and add the secret ingredient of competition, that will eventually start to drive self motivation. What we are talking about here are children who take their own responsibility for practice because they see they are getting better and meeting their objectives.

Not every child can look across at the player next to them and gain confidence from being 'better' than them, but every player can be better than themselves at a task than the last time they attempted it.



(STRUCTURE + OBJECTIVES + PRAISE) COMPETITION = MOTIVATION

Start with something they can work on and improve at, praise them for doing well at it, and watch their confidence grow. Coaches play a key role in building self motivation because the structure, objectives, praise, and competition are factors that come from outside - a player shouldn't be expected to become self motivated all on their own.

PLAYER MOTIVATION

So how does technology feed into this process? How can technology support us as coaches?

There are many ways we can use technology to build confidence, encourage off-pitch practice, and drive motivation. Perhaps the most obvious way to build confidence by generating success is to introduce your players to TopTekkers.

TopTekkers is a player development app trusted by academies in the English Premier League and Major League Soccer, that rewards players for their progression through challenges centered around individual techniques.

Within the app there are more than 50 skills to master, all featuring professional video tutorials designed by a Premier League Academy coach. When players work to beat their own score, they are awarded in-app trophies and their improvement is clear to see in the real-time progression charts.

In 2019 a pilot scheme showed that 94% of players enjoyed using TopTekkers, while 100% of users showed an improvement in ability during their time engaging with the app.

For more information about TopTekkers, visit the website [here](#) or download from your mobile app store - it's free for coaches to get started!

Our Head of Product Development Terry Barton covered the topic of player motivation and more in his webinar last week, titled "Player Development and the Role Technology can play", which you can view [here](#).

TECHNIQUE, SOCCER'S SKELETON KEY

"You build a player like you build a house. First comes the basement, the base of the player is the technique. You get that between seven and fourteen years of age. If you have no technical skill at fourteen, you can forget it, you can never be a football player." Arsene Wenger

TOPTEKKERS

THE COACHING MANUAL

The Coaching Manua...

Download the slides [here](#).

THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTION

THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTION

The basis and reasoning behind reflection in any walk of life is to learn more about ourselves from a previous performance/experience and then determine how things can be done better in the future. If any coach wants to develop they should seriously look at how to fit reflective practice into their routine as it's a great way in which to improve. However, like any skill, it can take time to do it well and efficiently. Reflection can cover things like delivery to players, interventions throughout the session - the timing of and delivery of, man-management situations, the success of certain practices and more.

Become more self aware

Being more self-aware is really important in coaching as it allows you to learn more about your strengths and your weaknesses. Self-awareness is useful when learning how you are perceived by others or in this instance the players in your team and maybe even the parents of said players.

It sometimes can be hard to be fully self-aware so it might be useful to get the opinions of some of the parents, people watching, assistant coaches etc. Coaches can always record their sessions/games to then look back at the footage and further review their coaching. It doesn't have to be of a professional standard it just needs to capture what you have said to your players throughout the session/game.

There's always time

There can be a common misconception that coaches don't have the time to reflect on each training session/game but this is not the case. The reflection process does take long so coaches should always be able to find the time, whether that's in the car journey home, at home before you go to sleep, on the way to work the following morning etc.

At first, it can just be a 5-10 minute thought process in your head to mull over the good and bad from the session/game. As time goes on and you become more comfortable self-analysing and you can start to implement a proper process, dedicate more time and even begin to write things down.

A useful habit to get into can be to plan your session for the following week directly after reflection. The Coaching Manual offers cutting edge session planning software to make planning and designing your own sessions easier than ever. The can be found in the My Content section of the platform.



THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTION

Don't be afraid to try something different

A lot of grassroots and novice coaches can copy and follow coaching techniques from elite-level coaches and there is nothing wrong with this. However, upon reflection, it may become apparent that these techniques don't work with a coach's particular style or don't fit with a certain group of players.

Similarly, if you are already employing an unconventional technique in your coaching and you find it to be effective upon reflection then obviously stick with it.

As previously mentioned, a lot of trying something new or sticking with what you know comes down to understanding your players more and discovering what works best for them.

Introduce it with your players

Saving five minutes at the end of a session can be useful to talk to the players to ask what they thought went well, what didn't go well. You as a coach can then use this feedback to reflect on the areas that can be used again (what went well) and the areas that need development (what didn't go well).

This process will usually happen on a matchday as coaches speak with their players after the full-time whistle in the changing room but it can be also useful to encourage players to have a think about the game in their own time so they can try and improve on something next week.

Check out this [handy article](#) which highlights the effectiveness of allowing players to lead the reflection of the game on the car journey home.



COACH EDUCATION

COACH EDUCATION

What would you say to a player on your team who says that they can coach themselves just as effectively as you can coach them? If a player said that we would think they were arrogant and difficult to coach, so why would we allow ourselves to think the same way when it comes to coach education?

It may sound obvious, but as coaches, it is important that we seek to further our journey through proper continuous education. You may have completed a certain level of coaching qualification but there is always a reason to equip yourself with more coaching knowledge. Doing so will help you maintain, or even improve, the knowledge and skills required to deliver the best possible service to your players. Seeking out new educational content for your coaching journey will mean that you and your coaching knowledge stay up-to-date, and you are informed of the latest trends within the game.

Without coach education, soccer ceases to exist

As coaches, we pass down our greater experience and knowledge to guide players down their path of development. Coach educators do the same for coaches. If this chain of education is broken, the game ceases to exist - coaches educating coaches who educate players is the way the sport continues moving forward.

What if no one ever taught coaches the best way to develop technical skills? Or to teach their players the best way to create and find space? Or the best way to transition from attack to defence while playing in a 5-3-2 formation? Without the sharing of knowledge over the years, the game would not be where it is today. What would Pep Guardiola's approach to the game be like if he wasn't able to draw upon a lineage that includes Johan Cruyff, Rinus Michels, Ernst Happel and Hugo Meisl?

There is an invaluable treasure chest of knowledge out there, and it's important that as coaches, we know how to unlock it.

Of course, formal coach education through qualifications is vital for any coach. Generally, it helps us to understand the game, its principles, and learn from coaches more experienced than ourselves. The 'passing on' of knowledge is essential and completing coaching qualifications is just one way of doing this.

A growth mindset

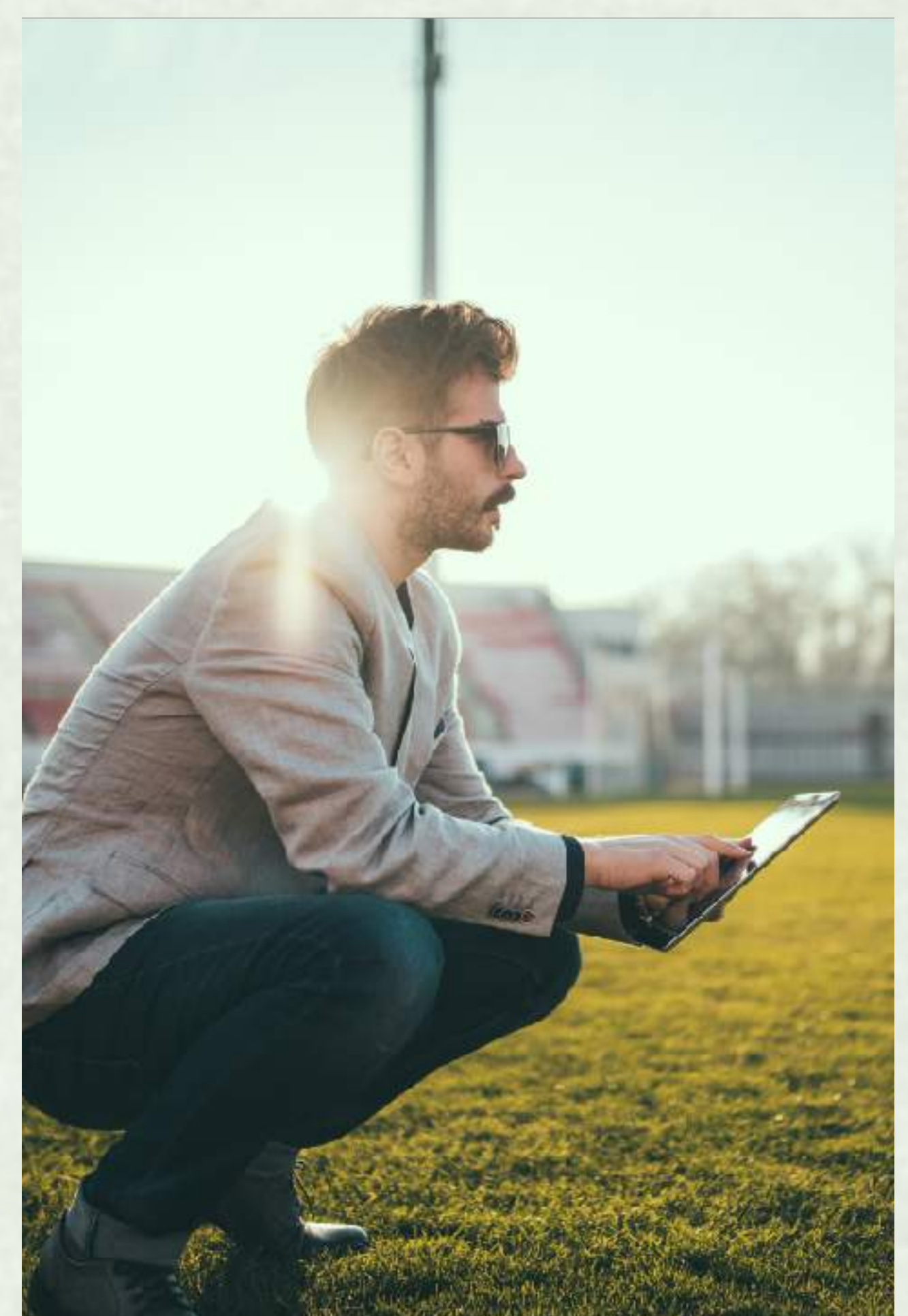
Your coaching career will not always be smooth sailing - no one wins every game or reaching their targets every single season. Sometimes, things might not be going your way and your progress will feel like it has halted. That's when it's vital that you develop a growth mindset when it comes to improving yourself and your players.

A loss of form, bad results, even players questioning your methods can all be very frustrating, especially when you are putting in a lot of training and hard work. You must maintain the proper mindset to keep focusing on growth and the process instead of having high expectations and focusing only on the final score. This growth mindset is critical for any team to get to the next level.

- Focus on improvement, not perfection
- View progress as success, not just winning
- When something goes wrong, adapt
- Learn from your mistakes, on and off the pitch
- Look forward to challenges and do not fear trying new things

In other words, improving as a coach is success in itself. Being able to teach your players something new is a victory. You owe it to your players to use defeats on the pitch as learning opportunities for everyone in the team.

If you want to stay motivated and keep improving as a coach, you must have a growth mindset. If you stick to this process, success will eventually come.



COACH EDUCATION

How do I learn from other coaches?

It can be difficult to surround yourself with such knowledge, especially through in-person events or even one-to-one conversations. Soccer is a global sport and we can't attend every seminar or convention that piques our interest. Nor is it feasible to observe coaches from further afield than our local grassroots clubs (which is no bad thing, by the way) on a regular basis. That's why we have curated a wealth of coach knowledge, experience, and opinion, through hosting a series of long-form coaching webinars on The Coaching Manual, in which our experienced coaches sit down to discuss soccer with a variety of different coach educators and senior professionals.

Just a few examples of these webinars can be found here:

- [Landon Donovan, Manager, San Diego Loyal](#)
- [Mike Phelan, Manchester United First Team Coach](#)
- [Craig Mulholland, Rangers FC Head of Academy](#)
- [Adam Underwood, Leeds United Academy Manager](#)
- [Gareth Jennings, FIFA Head of Technical Leadership](#)
- [Kris Van Der Haegen, Belgium National Team's Director of Coach Education](#)

It is not just coach educators and high-profile professionals that we can learn from. Our peers and even coaches less experienced than ourselves can be excellent sources of information and inspiration. Attending in-person events like The Coaching Manual Live is an opportunity to network with like-minded coaches from different areas and backgrounds, coaching different teams with different challenges - picking their brains could solve problems you didn't even know you had.

Following The Coaching Manual's live event at Worksop Town earlier this year, Laurie Griffin, Worksop Town Academy Director, said: "The event was absolutely fantastic We feel that everybody has taken away something that they will be able to transfer into their practices to enhance the experience of the young players they're working with. I was speaking to coaches on the sidelines tonight and every one has said they've picked up one or two things that they can instantly instil into their practices."



COACH EDUCATION

Communication is an ongoing learning curve

Continuous coach education is just as important for learning how to effectively communicate your knowledge as it is for building it in the first place. It's no use learning everything there is to know about the way you want your players to play, when you're not able to properly convey your message.

You should take the time to reflect on your own delivery during training sessions as much as your matches - Do your players understand what you are asking them to do? Are you making yourself clear? Are you speaking to them on their level? Are you treating each player as an individual with specific learning styles? There is always room for improving the way we communicate with our players, and with each generation (and even each year group) bearing a different set of quirks and traits from the previous, it's always a good idea to keep on top of the best way to talk to the youngsters of today.

The best way to do that, of course, is to observe other coaches delivering sessions to other players, and take note of what is working. One piece of feedback that The Coaching Manual regularly receives is that our sessions offer a fantastic insight into how top coaches communicate with the group of players they are coaching. They know when to interrupt play, when to provide constructive feedback, when to offer encouragement, how to correct improper form or technique, and so on.

The best examples of this can be seen in our Pro Masterclass series, available to our Premium members. These include sessions and interviews by:

- [Aitor Karanka](#)
- [Pep Clotet](#)
- [Michael Appleton](#)
- [Rene Meulenstein](#)
- [Steve McClaren](#)
- [David Moyes](#)
- [Dean Smith](#)
- [Gary Rowett](#)
- [Chris Hughton](#)
- [Mark Warburton](#)
- [Alan Irvine](#)



Immerse yourself in learning

Attending events, watching webinars, observing sessions, and absorbing content are all ways of immersing yourself in coaching and in the sport of soccer. The more we learn from those who have come before us (as well as those going through their journey alongside us), the more we contribute to the furtherment of the sport we all love.

The best way to immerse yourself in coaching on a regular basis is with a Premium subscription to The Coaching Manual, which gives you access to the best broadcast-quality training session video content, the best in-depth coaching webinars, and the best in-person and online opportunities to further your coaching journey.

COACHING THROUGH THE AGE GROUPS

COACHING THROUGH THE AGE GROUPS

In most cases, grassroots coaches will follow the team they coach up through the age groups and this journey can provide a different set of challenges year on year. In this section, we will discuss tips and advice on how to adapt as your players develop and grow up.

A player's journey through their youth makes them change drastically both physically but also in terms of their levels of maturity. So coaches need to understand what these changes mean and adapt their coaching methods accordingly.

Physical Growth

Over the years as players grow up their bodies will change and in turn, their ability to do certain things on the football pitch will change as well. However, it is important to remember that certain players develop at different speeds so as a coach it's your job to recognise these differences.

For instance, when some players experience growth spurts they may lose some coordination, acceleration and even confidence in their ability. Therefore, coaches must be patient with these players if they begin to get frustrated with the lack of success when performing certain skills.

If this becomes a problem, you should plan to adapt sessions to help players with their confidence.

EXAMPLE:

A player is used to running past defenders in 1v1 situations however they are currently going through a growth spurt and have lost some power to accelerate. What should the coach do?

The coach could have a quiet word with the player during a break and set them different challenges to get some success. In this case, the coach may say to the player 'try and play a one-two to get around the defender'. This will then allow the player to work on their combination skills and hopefully benefit from the practice.



COACHING THROUGH THE AGE GROUPS

Maturity

Many adults/coaches/parents judge what players/children can do entirely based on their age. However, in many cases, a child's date of birth could be up to 12 months different to that of their peers but they are still placed in the same year at school.

Youth coaches should always bear this in mind when coaching their teams. In these situations, a player's maturity levels could be very different to that of some of their teammates.

This can affect many things in training, for example, the way in which players learn. Here are some of the different learning styles that should be addressed:

- **Visual (spatial):** Players who prefer looking at a tactics board.
- **Aural (auditory):** Players who prefer to listen to instructions.
- **Verbal (linguistic):** Players who prefer to talk in groups.
- **Physical (kinesthetic):** Players who prefer to try the practice for themselves.

Coaches should try and utilise these different tools to try and cover all the different learning styles of the players in their team.

Another thing that differing maturity levels can affect is how coaches should communicate with players. For example, the less mature players in the team require more basic language so they can fully understand the instructions. This means the more mature players should be able to understand the more technical terms.

Follow this [link](#) to view our communication infographics which can be shown to your players to help everyone on the team to be on the same page.

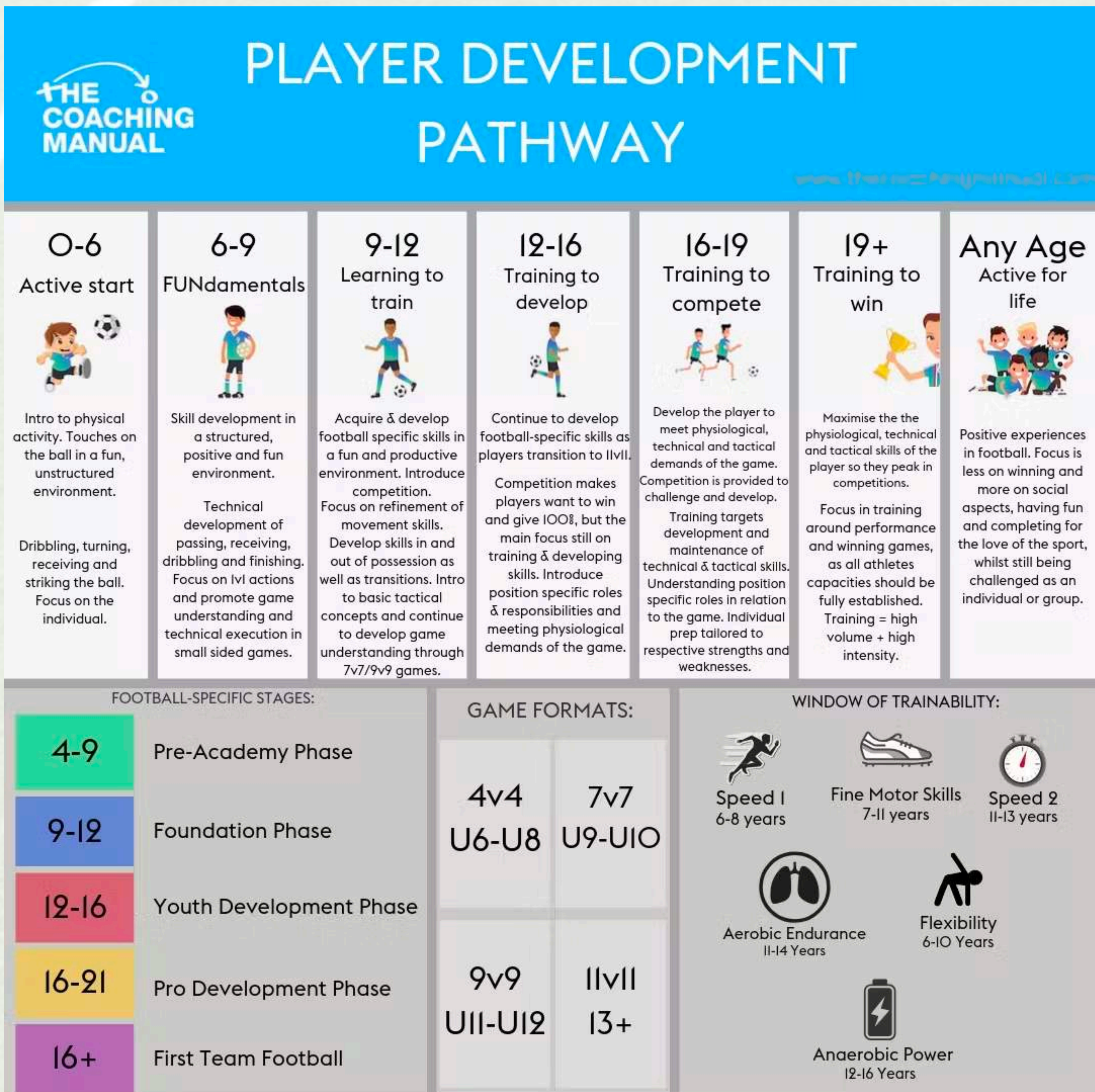


COACHING THROUGH THE AGE GROUPS

What to coach and when

The infographic below acts as the perfect guide when searching for what to coach your players during the different stages of their youth.

Starting from the pre-academy phase right up to first-team football you can adapt your sessions to maximise their development at any age.



FURTHER READING

FURTHER READING: DEVELOPING YOUR PHILOSOPHY

What is a philosophy?

Philosophy is essentially how you interpret the world around you, it is usually governed by your circumstances, your beliefs and by what you know. Importantly, philosophy isn't rigid, it evolves as circumstance, belief and knowledge change. In many ways, developing a philosophy is a process of continuous learning.

A philosophy is different from the culture within a team or club. The culture is the behaviour of the entirety of a club from top to bottom and the expectations we have of ourselves and others. The philosophy and culture should be decided and agreed upon by everyone in the club if possible.

Before we start to develop our philosophy, we must ask a lot of questions. What do we understand about the game? Do we know the laws? Do we know the principles of play? What are the players capable of? What do we like/not like?

[TCM guide: Developing a Philosophy \(click here\)](#)



FURTHER READING: THE PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

The Principles of Play are the lifeblood of football and without them, everything that a coach implements within tactics falls down.

As discussed in our 'Developing a Philosophy' guide, the Principles of Play need to be considered, learned, understood and executed for both players and coaches before we can think about our own interpretations of the game (Philosophy) in Youth Development.

Resources on The Coaching Manual



[Attacking Principles](#)
[Defending Principles](#)



[Coaching Attacking Principles in 4v4](#)
[Coaching Defending Principles in 4v4](#)

[Coaching Attacking Principles in 7v7: Part 1, Part 2, Part 3](#)
[Coaching Defending Principles in 7v7: Part 1, Part 2, Part 3](#)

[Coaching Attacking Principles in 9v9](#)
[Coaching Defending Principles in 9v9](#)



ABOUT THE COACHING MANUAL

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What is The Coaching Manual?

The Coaching Manual is the world's best digital coaching assistant. With 3,000+ pieces of professional session content, featuring some of the best and most respected coaches in the game, easy-to-use organisational tools, and consistent opportunities to grow and develop as a coach, clubs and coaches around the world benefit from the platform every day.

Who does The Coaching Manual work with?

The Coaching Manual works with coaches of all levels, from all over the globe. From beginner grassroots coaches, to Premier League Academy Managers, thousands of coaches benefit from the tools and resources at their disposal on The Coaching Manual every day.

Some of our partners include:



Professional Footballers' Association



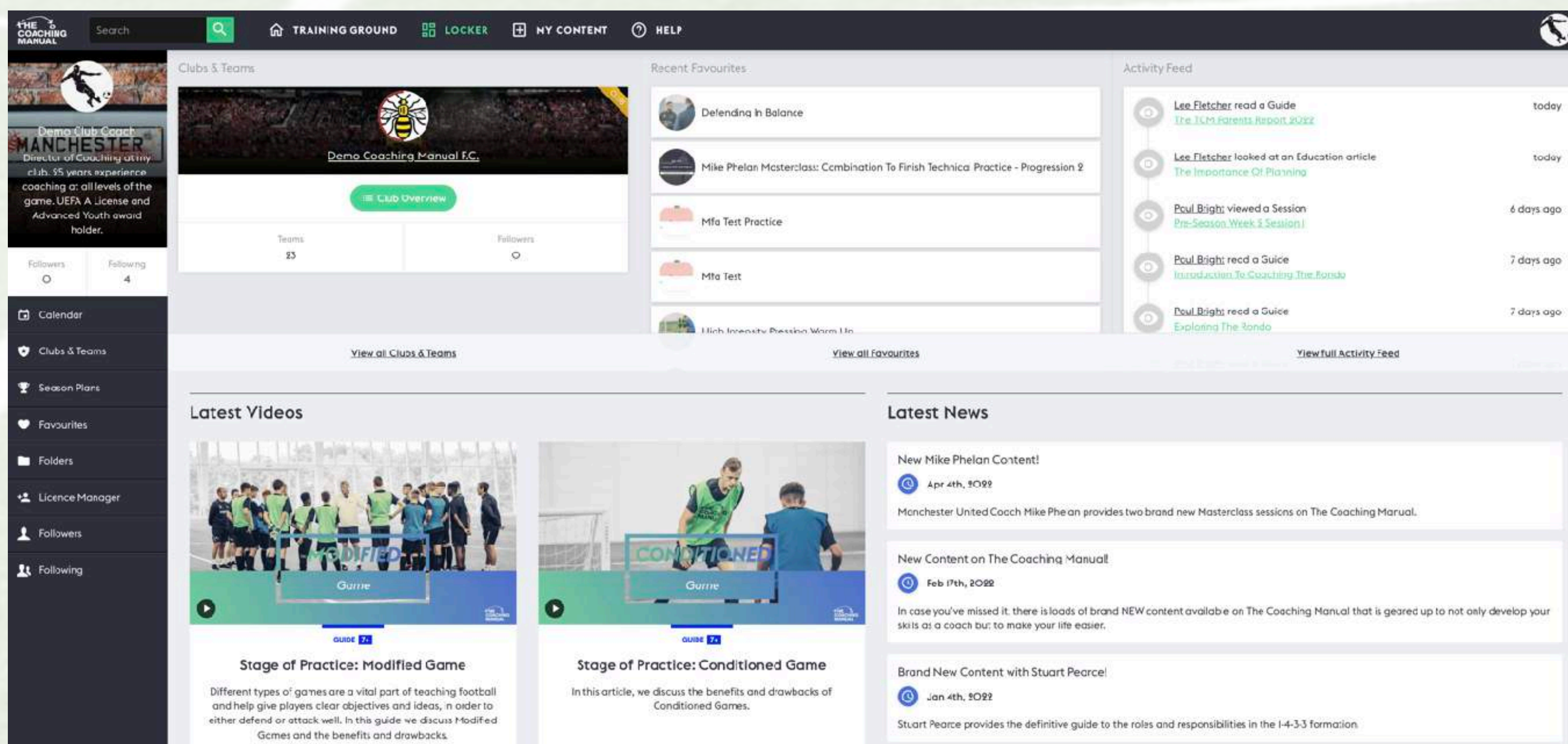
CHALLENGER
SPORTS™



HOW TO USE THE COACHING MANUAL

Locker

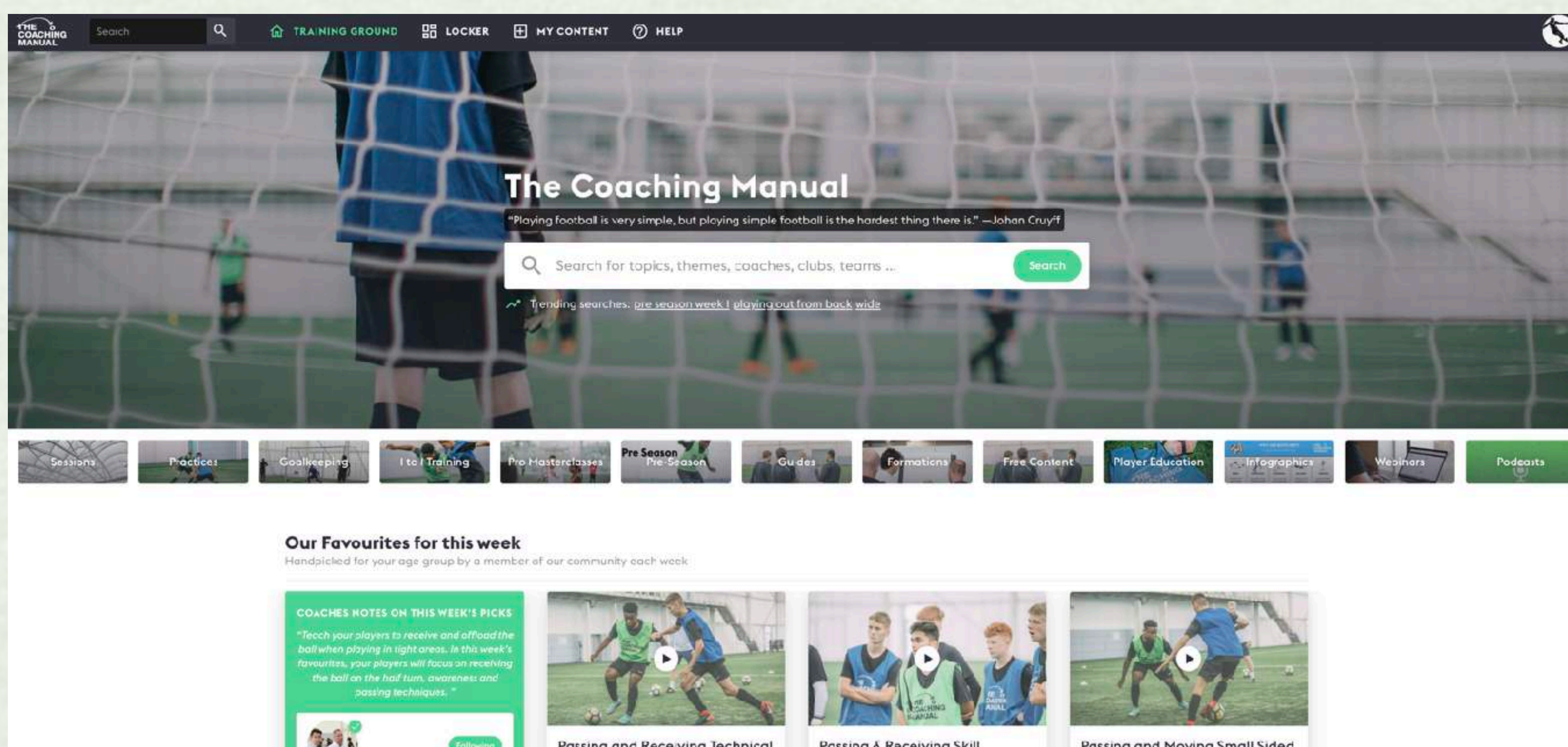
Your 'Locker' on The Coaching Manual is essentially your homepage. Here you will find an overview of the tools at your disposal, Team Management options that help you to keep your players and fellow coaches up to date with training and education, latest videos and sessions added to the platform, your Favourites, and Latest News.



Training Ground

The Training Ground is where you will find all the content on The Coaching Manual, including full sessions and broadcast-quality videos.

Near the top of the page you will find various tabs that help you navigate through the thousands of pieces of content, from sessions and practices, to infographics, guides, player education, and podcasts.

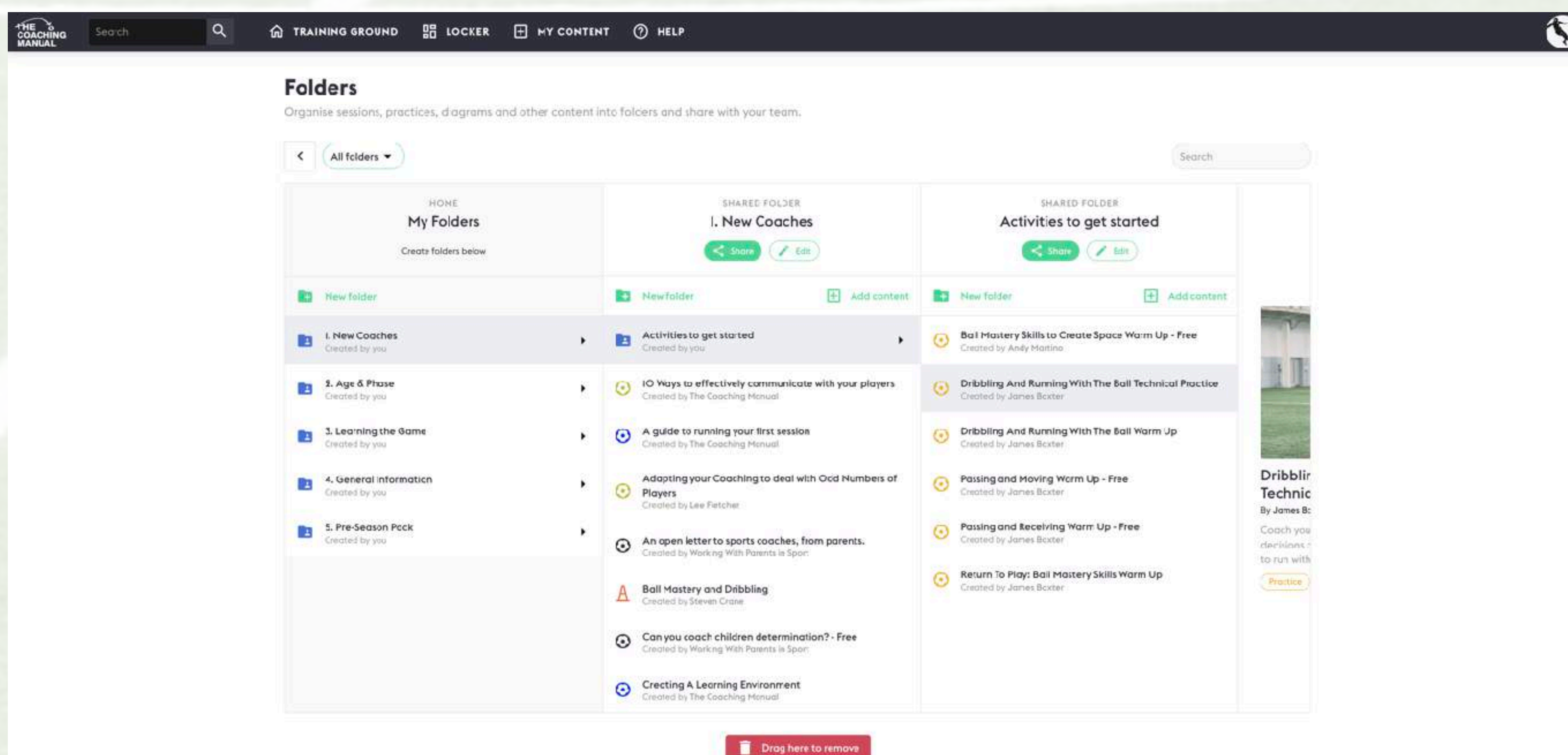


HOW TO USE THE COACHING MANUAL

Folders

One of the most useful and innovative tools on The Coaching Manual is the Folders feature. Here, you can curate your own library of content that suits you and your team's philosophies, and build up a curriculum for your players.

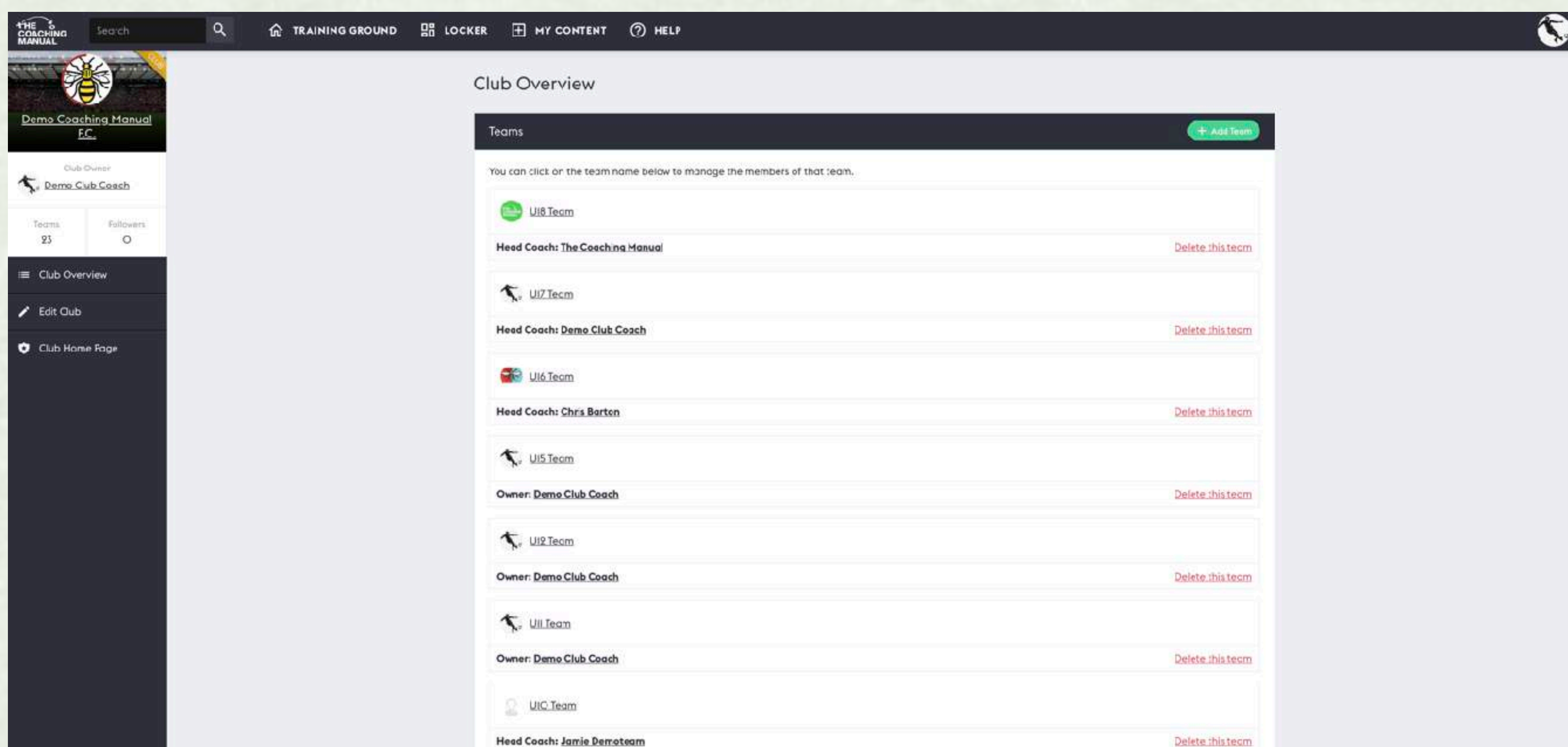
The Folders are fully sharable with other coaches and players, which has proven to be an invaluable benefit to many teams we work with. Sharing Folders saves time, improves communication within your club, and also improves the overall efficiency of your training.



Team Management

Manage more than one team, or are part of a club structure that shares ideas and philosophies across age groups? Then this tool will allow you to all stay on the same page.

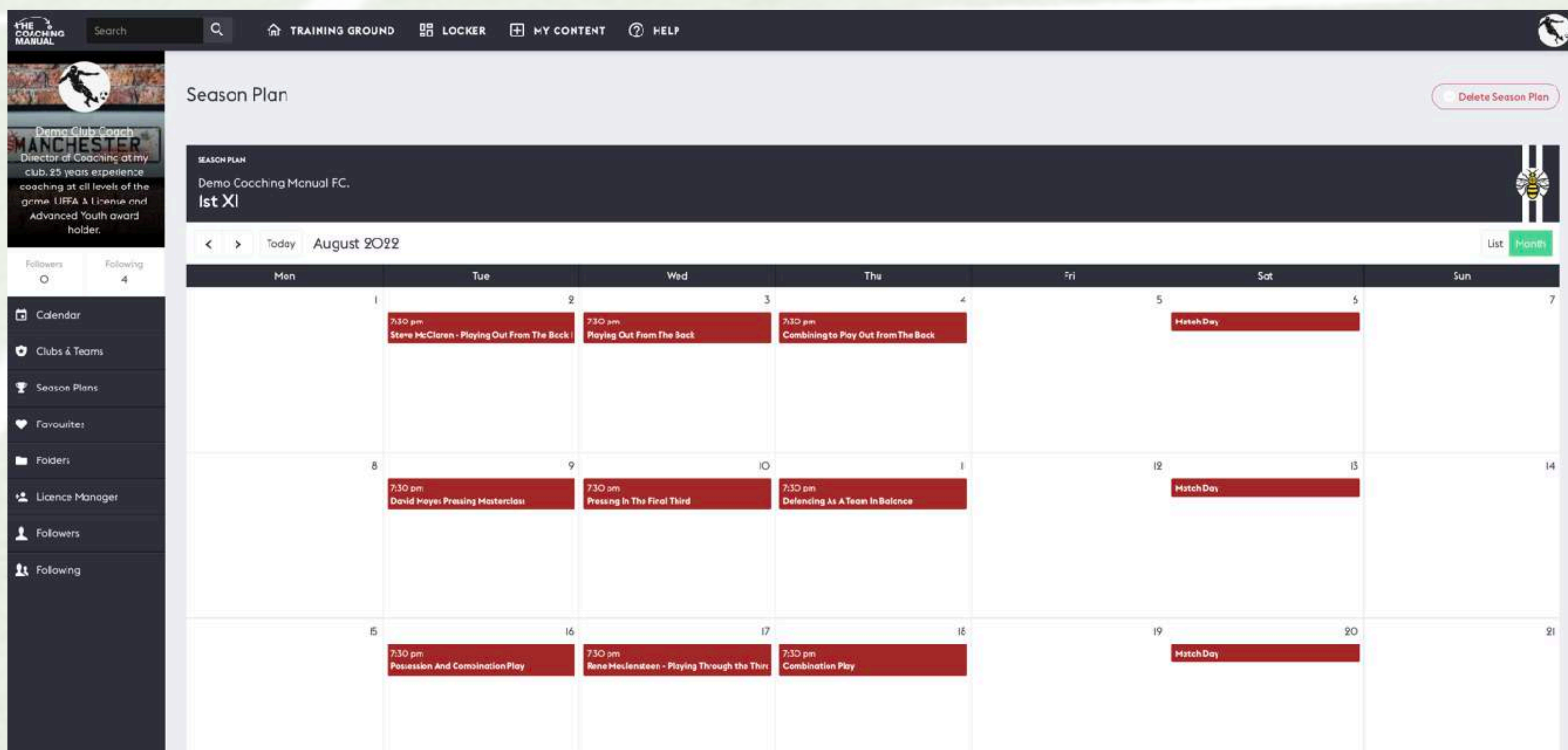
If your fellow coaches also use The Coaching Manual, this is where you can make sure you're connected within the platform, allowing you to share folders and content, and manage your teams within the overall club set-up. If your fellow coaches are not on The Coaching Manual, this section makes it easy to invite them - trust us, it will make your job a lot easier!



HOW TO USE THE COACHING MANUAL

Season Plans

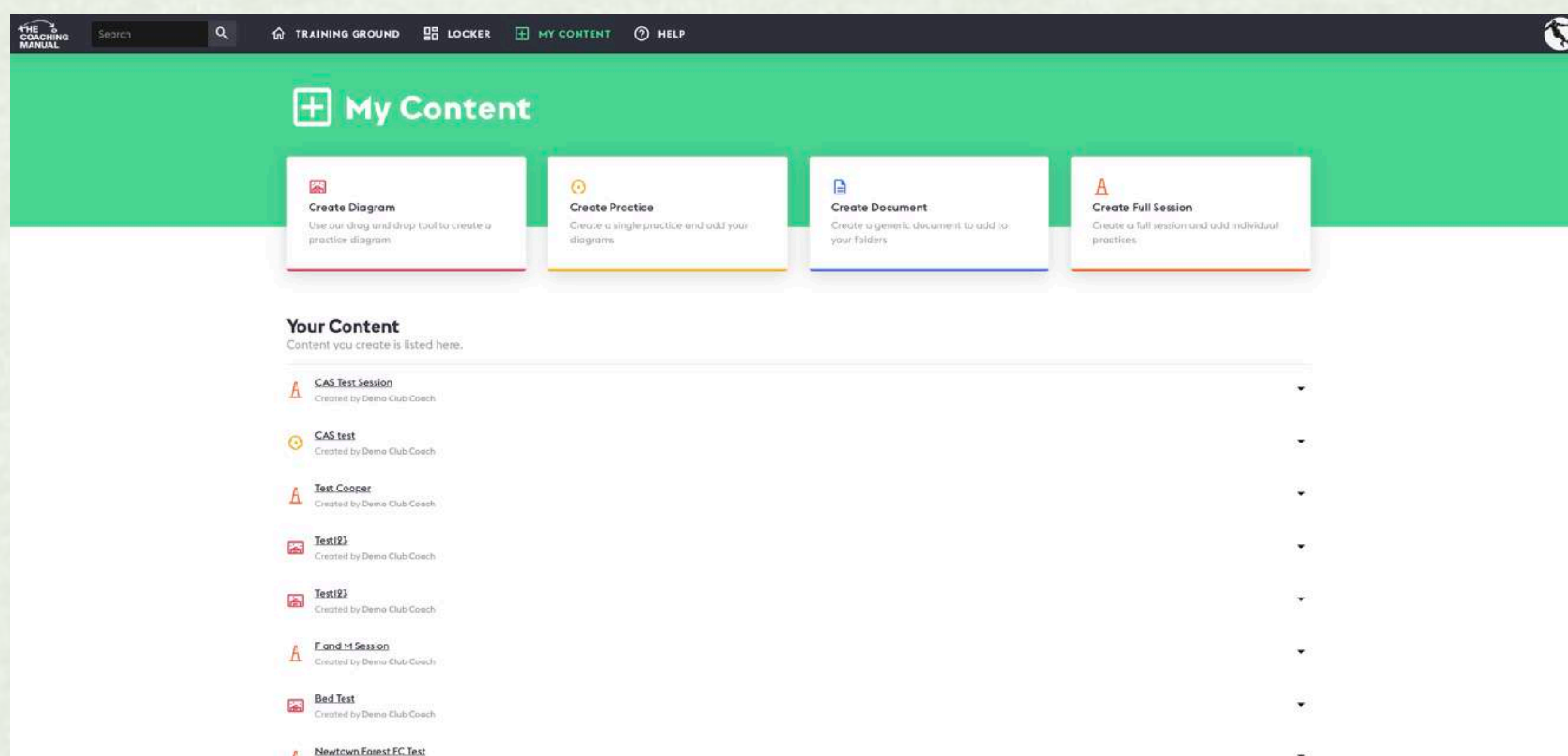
Our Season Plan tool is unique in that you can either map out your entire season with the touch of a button to pre-populate the next year's training sessions, or you can create your own from scratch and go into as much detail as you wish. You can spend as much, or as little time as you want, scheduling your training sessions (and sharing it with your coaches and players).



My Content

Sure, this might not be the first tool you use as a beginner coach, but it will be a fantastic addition to your coaching toolkit when you are ready. Here, you can create your own diagrams, practices, documents, and even full sessions.

The designer tool is intuitive and easy to use, so it doesn't take much time or prior knowledge to put together your own Coaching Manual-style sessions for your team.



WHAT NEXT?

Individual accounts on The Coaching Manual

If you like what you see in this guide, and would like access to our extensive library of tools and content, you have a number of options. First of all, there's the free Basic Account.

Basic

A lot of our fantastic content on the platform is available to users for FREE. All you have to do is sign up to a Basic account. [Read this article](#) to find out exactly what content Basic access gives you.

Premium

Did you know that a premium subscription to The Coaching Manual only costs £5 (\$7) per month? That's a cup of coffee these days.

With a Premium subscription, you get access to all the benefits of a Basic account, plus full unrestricted access to every piece of content on the platform, Season Plan tools, and Session Designer Tools.



Club Accounts

Your club may already have a club account, and that may be the reason you are reading this guide. In which case, you should already have full access to The Coaching Manual as part of their package.

If your club does not have an account, send the club's decision-maker our way - we'd love to explain how The Coaching Manual can improve players, educate coaches, save time, and even save money overall. Get in touch by emailing sales@thecoachngmanual.com

THE COACHING MANUAL

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