

2013 PARENT GUIDE TO LONG TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT (LTPD)
PREAMBLE

The new Long Term Player Development (LTPD) model has been developed to address the many shortcomings of the old playing model. Adherence to the LTPD model is mandated by the Canadian Soccer Association. To fully understand the new model it is important to review the reasons for changing from the status quo. This antiquated program produced few world class players, had unimpressive international results and resulted in an inordinate player dropout rate. The general quality of the “Beautiful game” at all levels has significantly deteriorated. To address this deterioration many renowned experts analysed the issues and prescribed a cure which in Canada is referred to as LTPD. Similar programs have been initiated throughout the world and applied to several different sports.

During the analysis of the sport it was noted that in many countries, young players do not play competitive soccer (or team sports) until they are in their teens. During their preteen years they develop the basic skills in school yards, alley ways and in open spaces. They practice in small groups with their friends without adult supervision. When they graduate from this environment they retain a litany of skills that create a seamless transition into the full size game.

STATUS QUO

In the past, players were selected at a very young age and slotted into teams based on their physical strengths. It was obvious that players born in the early months of the year would be the stronger player in their respective age division and were then assigned into the competitive stream. The other players would be relegated to the recreational league or quit the sport.

Winning games was paramount, even at the very young ages. The development of soccer skills received only minimal attention. The common calls from the bench and stands would be run fast and kick hard. This simplistic approach to the game produced limited success at the young ages. As the players developed they found little beauty or enjoyment in this type of play. On the world stage we played with little flare and were clearly inferior in skills, flexibility and imagination. Our young players were leaving the games in droves.

Without skills the game has little attraction. Speed and strength are essential ingredients of all good players. But, they must be complimented with a copious quantity of skill and imagination.

In the prevailing system our young players were confronted with several demoralizing obstacles as follows:-

- a) The size of the pitch was much too large in relation to the physical size of the young players
- b) Goal Keepers had little chance of stopping a goal due to the relative large size of the goal.
- c) During the game players only had a few touches of the ball while playing on such a large field.
- d) Keeping score and posting league tables was demeaning and resulted in ridicule and loss of self-esteem.
- e) The team results were paramount as opposed to the young players’ well being.
- f) During games young players are under constant pressure by both the parents and coaches.
- g) Players are discouraged from trying various skills in case it may impact on the game results.
- h) The games (and practices) are boring and/or pressure cooker type events with no fun for the kids.
- i) Games losses are attributed to the coach, when in fact the outcome is often the result of the assigned players. As a consequence stronger players are given more field time in order to achieve team results.
- j) Parents believe that playing up against bigger players will eventually make the youngsters better players when in fact it has the opposite effect.

The objective of the LTPD model is to address the above shortcomings, make the game more enjoyable, improve skills and as a consequence produce more world class players. The emphasis must now be on the individual player.

Our measure of success will be the growth in the local game and the retention of our players. LTPD Model

To comply with the LTPD program for players U8 to U17 the Hanover soccer club has introduced the following enhancements.

- a. Use appropriately sized ball and field to suit the players’ physical abilities. To transition from mini to full size field a new mid-sized field will be introduced with smaller goal posts.
- b. Players will be distributed in a manner to sustain team parity. If parity becomes an issue during the season, players may be reallocated to retain balance.
- c. Practices are more frequent at a ratio of 2/3 to 1 where players receive lots of touches of the ball.
- d. Practices are fun and include mini games and scrimmages
- e. Game results and goal scorers are of little consequence and no record will be kept.
- f. No competitive tournaments
- g. Festivals will be arranged where players will compete in a noncompetitively environment

- h. The emphasis is on the individual player as opposed to the team/game results.
- i. The player is encouraged to try and hone their skills under game conditions without fear of failure.
- j. Parents and Coaches are to encourage players to attempt variable technical skills.
- k. Use small sided games to master the applicable soccer skills
- l. No playoff games in any competition
- m. An intermediate sized field to bridge mini to full size fields will be used.
- n. Over competitive behaviour by parents and coaches is discouraged
- o. Extensive training for all club coaches.

At this age, the development of the individual player above that of the team shall be paramount. All decisions on team makeup, training and game environment shall be based on this philosophy.

In general, the development of these players shall be in an environment similar to that of an academy with frequent practices, fun scrimmages and encouragement from a highly qualified coaching staff.

As the players progress beyond this development stage they will be introduced into the full size game and may play at a highly competitive or club league level teams. At this stage the team becomes paramount and player selection is reintroduced.