

## COACHING FOCUS IN PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

### Marshalltown Area Soccer Club

Gareth Smith, Director of Coaching



#### The U9 & U10 Player;

The period of development, ages eight and nine is considered the beginning of the “Golden Age” for skill learning. The reason for this is that players actually have the capacity to listen, comprehend and perform more complicated instructions and directions.

**Technical Focus:** Improving and refining player’s fundamental technique (using both feet) through technical repetition is an important element of coaching at this stage and expanding the player’s individual and small group tactical awareness is important. Practices should, through out the season, encompass the development of all techniques (dribbling, passing, shooting, heading, talking, receiving) in an environment that challenges the players decision making within the game.

**Tactical Focus:** Players should be asked and challenged to make decision, for example try to control the ball and look for teammates rather than simply kicking the ball forward. With regards to control the coach should attempt to help players to develop “pre-control” vision whenever possible by asking players to assess the situation and space available around them before receiving a pass. An example of this would be to help players take their first touch away from the oncoming pressuring defender.

**Physiological Focus:** Technique has a direct coloration to physical strength and the size and weight of the ball, all of which have an impact on the distance and accuracy of the players kicking ability. Furthermore, proper stretching routines are encouraged and should be incorporated in the warm up and cool down of each practice and games, which will help to implement healthy habits.

**Psychological Focus:** Players at this age start to realize that winning and losing are directly linked to the player’s ability, and not necessarily effort, and that in order to be successful player’s skills must be refined. In addition, players start to compare their personal identity with their perceived ability and thus it is imperative that the feedback from peers, parents and coaches is consistently positive. A ratio of 15:1 for positive to constructive corrective should be strived for.

**Game Focus:** Small sided games include 1v1 up to and no more than 6v6.