

Cramlington United Football Club

FOOTBALL STRATEGY & PHILOSOPHY

V5.0



ACCREDITED
CLUB ★ ★ ★
PART OF ENGLAND FOOTBALL



**FOR
ALL**

01

The Club

02

Formats of the Game

03

Who we are

04

What else?

05

Coaching Philosophy

06

Player Development

CONTENTS



THE CLUB

SECTION 1

THE CLUB

History

Cramlington United was established in July 2010 with 6 teams (merge of Cramlington Blue Star and Burnside United).

16 years later we now have 65+ teams and recreational football, with over 1000 player involvement, 140+ qualified coaching staff, and support volunteers and a dedicated committee.

The club is proud of its diversity which includes

- Recreational Football
- Mixed teams
- Girl's teams
- Disability teams
- Male/Female adult teams

Purpose

This 'strategy and philosophy' provides the cornerstone for the club.

Key considerations include

- Defining 'football section' identity for the future
- Sharing knowledge
- Sharing the journey
- Defining overall plans/pathways for the Coaches & Players
- Consistency throughout the club



THE CLUB

Three Star Accredited Club

Cramlington United are proud to be an England Football 'Three Star Accredited Club'.



To be a three star Accredited Club, you must:

Offer the complete accredited player pathway for both male and female whilst offering a minimum of one disability team at any age group, playing within FA sanctioned League competitions.*

MALE



Offer at least 1 team in at least 8 youth age groups (U7 to U18)

U7	U8	U9
U10	U11	U12
U13	U14	U15
U16	U17	U18

Offer at least 1 adult team from age groups U19 to Open Age

U19	U20	U21
U23	OA	

- * Must have U7 or U8
- * Must have U16, U17 or U18
- * Must have 1 adult team, can be either U19, U20, U21, U23 or Open Age
- ** Max gap of 2 years between teams up to U15s.

FEMALE



Offer at least 1 team in at least 4 of these age groups

U9	U10	U11
U12	U13	U14
U15	U16	

- * Must have U9 or U10
- * Must have U15 or U16
- ** Maximum gap of 2 years between teams up to U16s

DISABILITY



Must have at least 1 disability team at any age





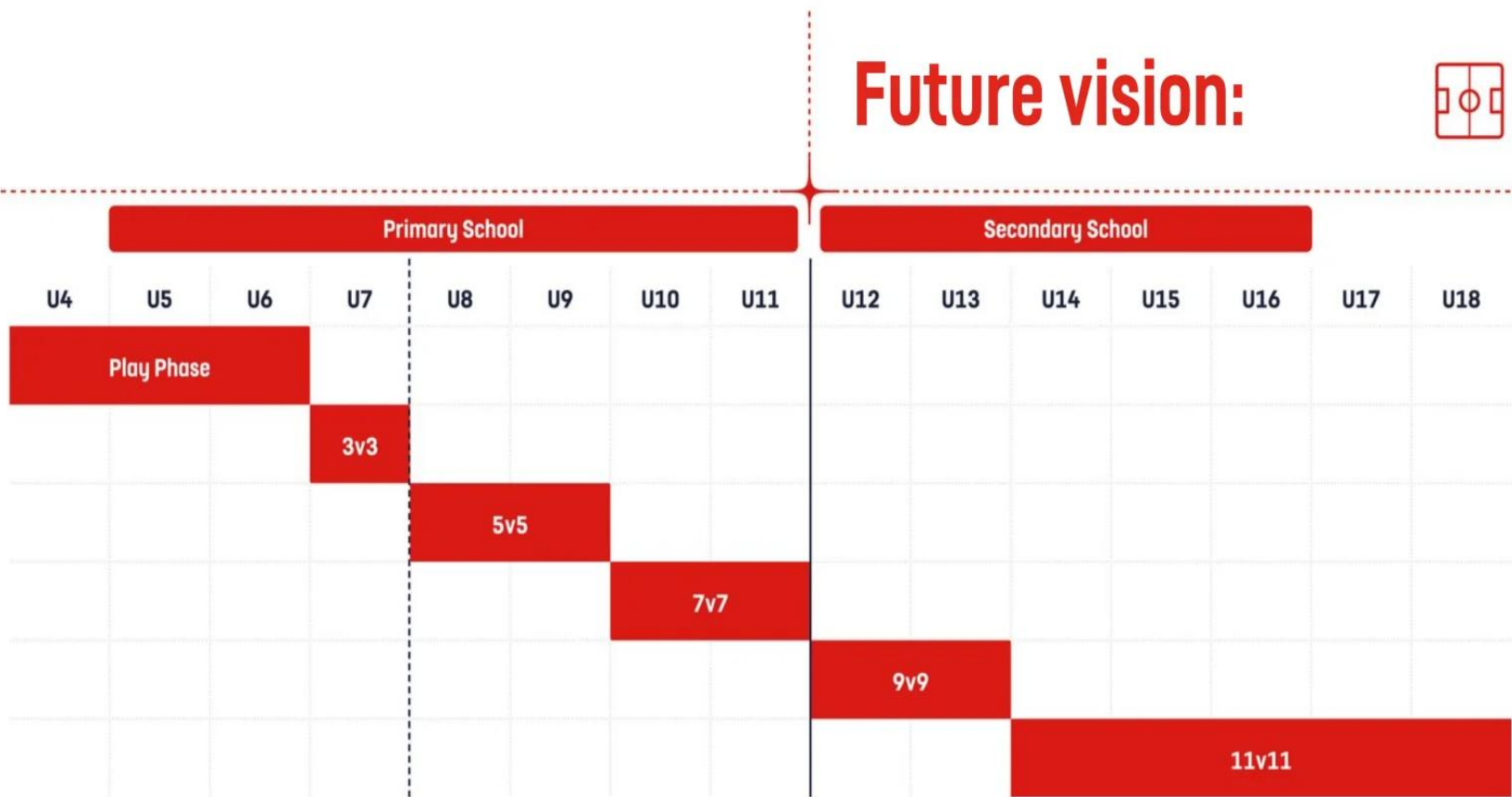
FORMATS OF THE GAME

SECTION 2

FORMATS OF THE GAME

Future Vision

Young players should be exposed to a variety of games they can play, rather than struggle to understand a game created for adults.



What does this mean for my team?

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
U7	5v5	5v5	3v3	3v3	3v3	3v3
U8	5v5	5v5	5v5	5v5	5v5	5v5
U9	7v7	7v7	5v5	5v5	5v5	5v5
U10	7v7	7v7	7v7	7v7	7v7	7v7
U11	9v9	9v9	7v7	7v7	7v7	7v7
U12	9v9	9v9	9v9	9v9	9v9	9v9
U13	11v11	11v11	9v9	9v9	9v9	9v9
U14	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11
U15	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11
U16	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11

FORMATS OF THE GAME

Dimensions

Young players should be exposed to a variety of games they can play, rather than struggle to understand a game created for adults.

Recommended goalpost size and pitch dimensions

Age Group	Maximum Permitted Format	Ball Size	Recommended Pitch Size Metres (without run off)	Minimum Pitch Size Metres (without run off)	Maximum Pitch Size Metres (without run off)	Recommended Goalpost Sizes (Feet)
Under 7	3v3	Size 3	15x10	15x10	20x15	4x2.5
Under 8	5v5	Size 3	37x27	27x18	37x27	12x6
Under 9	5v5	Size 3	37x27	27x18	37x27	12x6
Under 10	7v7	Size 3	55x37	46x27	55x37	12x6
Under 11	7v7	Size 3	55x37	46x27	55x37	12x6
Under 12	9v9	Size 4	73x46	64x37	73x46	16x7
Under 13	9v9	Size 4	73x46	64x37	73x46	16x7
Under 14	11v11	Size 5	82x50	82x46	91x55	21x7*
Under 15	11v11	Size 5	91x55	82x46	100x64	24x8**
Under 16	11v11	Size 5	91x55	82x46	100x64	24x8
Under 17	11v11	Size 5	100x64	91x46	118x91	24x8
Under 18	11v11	Size 5	100x64	91x46	118x91	24x8
Open Age	11v11	Size 5	100x64	91x46	118x91	24x8

All pitches must have a minimum 3m run off

* 24 x 8 permitted ** 21 x 7 permitted



FutureFit



NOTE: Refer to league rules for approved age specific formats, dimensions and sizes.

OFFICIAL



WHO WE ARE

SECTION 3

WHO WE ARE

Coaches and Volunteers



As a minimum all coaches at our club will undergo the following training courses

- The 'Introduction to Coaching Football' (FA Level 1) Award
- FA Emergency Aid
- FA Safeguarding Children.

Coaches will be encouraged to attend CPD events and further learning courses.

All of our coaches/support help have FA Enhanced DBS checks and FA Safeguarding Children qualification.

The FA requires everyone who works or volunteers in children's football and regularly cares for, trains, supervises or is in charge of children to apply for a FA DBS Enhanced Disclosure.

◀ Our coaches recognise the time required in their role. This includes preparation for planning coaching sessions, setting up & doing the sessions, reviewing sessions and match days. Coaches will not just turn up at the start of their session or match.

WHO WE ARE

Ethos and Culture



Winning awards is always fantastic for the Club however; the awards are as a result of our ethos and culture which is based around inclusion and enjoyment. Wherever possible we try our utmost to include players of all abilities. If there are no places available within a team, players are still welcome to train with the team or join our recreational football as a way of keeping them involved.

The end of each season the coaches will take time to reflect and discuss player / team development, ensuring coaches recognise and consider player ability, development and the management of opinions. This may result in player movement across teams or playing up an age group as an example, many factors will need to be considered as part of this process with the player development at the forefront of any decisions.

Coaches, Players and Parents will show respect and any issues, whether it is player development / movement or other concerns it should be discussed initially within their own team environment.

WHO WE ARE

Club Structure



Chair – Dave Malone

Vice-Chair – Sharon Harrison

Club Secretary – Alan Lemin

Welfare Officers – Kev Hastings, Dave Malone & Alan Lemin

Female Football Development

Mark Hedley /
Gemma Wylie

General Football Development

Kevin Hastings

Mini-Soccer Development

Emma Pears

Disability Development

Amy Foggett

Female Football Hub:
- Wildcats (age 5 to 11)
- Just Play Wildercats (age 16+)
Schools & Mentoring

General Enquiries & Support
Men's Team

Mini-Soccer Mixed Teams

Disability Teams

WHO WE ARE

Club Structure



The club culture and value is extremely important

“These values are our principles and standards of behavior and what we consider important”



WHO WE ARE

Parents & Guardians



Environment - Reflecting on loyalty and value in football communities

Parents can be on the lookout for what they think might be better. Unknown that the standards their current club or coach has already one of the best. It's just you have become used to it, so think it is the norm. Unfortunately, it is not the norm – you have been lucky.

Think about what you have

- **Encouraging Reflection** - Parents are invited to pause and thoughtfully consider existing club benefits before making changes.
- **Value of Stability** - Long-term player growth depends on a stable, trusting, and consistent environment in youth football.
- **Supportive Club Culture** - Cramlington United F.C. fosters a safe, motivating space focused on individual progress, not pressure.
- **Informed Decision-Making** - Parents should make choices with clarity and perspective, avoiding impulsive decisions based on emotion.
- **Listen to Child's Voice** - Parents should prioritize their child's enthusiasm and emotional wellbeing over external opinions.
- **Supportive Growth Environment** - The club fosters a positive and supportive atmosphere that allows players to develop at their own pace.
- **Confidence and Reassurance for Parents** - Parents can trust the club's commitment to player wellbeing and long-term development, ensuring a nurturing environment.

WHO WE ARE

Parents & Guardians



Why this matters

- **Importance of Stability**
Stable environments help young players build confidence and nurture strong friendships essential for growth.
- **Long-Term Development Focus**
Progress is gradual, often visible over months and years through improved decision-making and emotional maturity.
- **Supportive Coaching Environment**
Strong coaching fosters happiness and resilience without relying on constant comparison or immediate results.
- **Risks of Changing Teams**
Frequent club changes can disrupt routines, friendships, and a sense of belonging, impacting player confidence.

WHO WE ARE

Parents & Guardians



Has your child

- Enjoyed their football and look forward to training and games?
- Enjoyed a healthy balanced and positive environment?
- Showed resilience?
- Progressed individually and as a team player?
- Learned life lessons? (core values, handling success and setbacks, building character and social skills)

Think about your next move

- **Value of Reflection**
Encourage thoughtful reflection before making decisions to ensure long-term enjoyment and development in sports.
- **Importance of Support**
Trusted and supported players progress faster and feel more confident than those under pressure or anxiety.
- **Consistency Builds Confidence**
Consistency helps players build strong relationships and understanding with coaches and teammates.
- **Patience and Stability** - Patience and weighing pros/cons, protect stability, enjoyment, & a sense of belonging in youth development.

WHO WE ARE

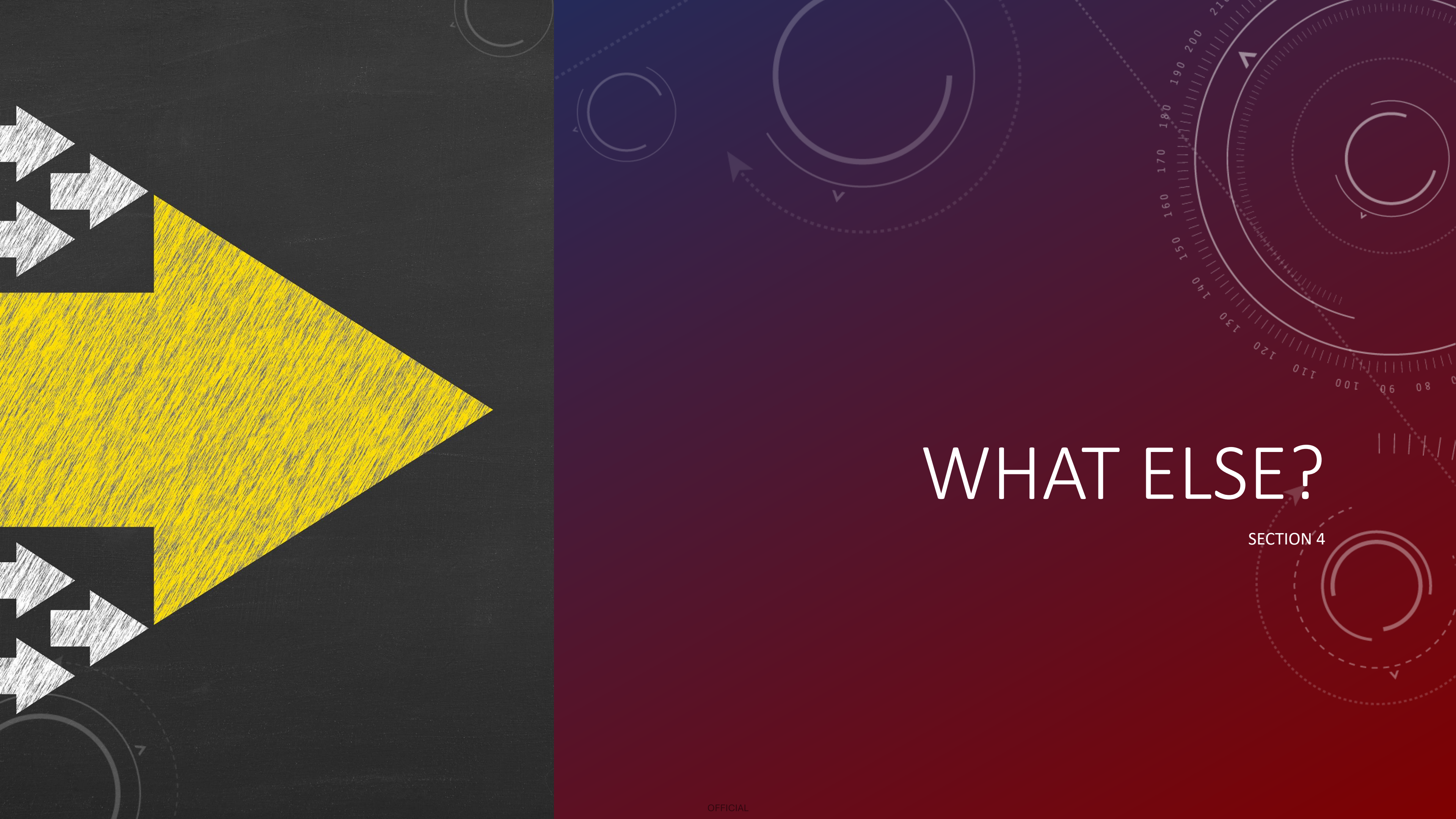
Parents & Guardians

Final Message

A happy player will always progress quicker than an unhappy player, playing under pressure.

Football should be fun and inclusive, welcoming players of all skill levels to enjoy the game.





WHAT ELSE?

SECTION 4

WHAT ELSE?

Club Pathways

The club do not only facilitate full pathways in grassroots football, we also try and provide something for everyone, whether volunteering or playing. As a community club we look at partnerships, strong community links and involvement.

The aim is to

- Remove barriers
- Encourage and support participation
- Work in partnership with schools
- Work with the community
- Create a real 'positive' and 'can do' attitude, build confidence & getting outside comfort zones
- Embracing & developing
- Providing a pathway into grassroots football
- Exercise & promoting mental wellbeing
- Opportunity to socialise and make friends

Recreational Football sessions

- Crammy's Cubs (mixed 4 to 7-year-olds)
- Wildcats (girls 5 to 11-year-olds)
- Kickabout: Wildercats (females aged 16+)
- Walking Football
- Futsal
- Comets

These are fun, socially inclusive & age/ability appropriate.

Other football opportunities

Involvement in our teams and our wider 'football family', whether an active role in promoting participation, coaching or supporting other coaches, this could also include administrative and fundraising roles.



COACHING PHILOSOPHY

SECTION 5

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Provide direction, purpose and guidance to the process of coaching young players



COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Coaches Behaviour

- Coaches are required to strictly follow the FA Respect Code of Conduct.
- Players must be free to play during matches, with positive encouragement from parents and coaches.
- Information from the touchline should be in the form of occasional questions from the coach and reassurance and mentoring in both positional and motivational play.
- Patrolling the touchline constantly shouting instructions should never happen.
- Players will learn from their own mistakes and will be given an opportunity to correct rather than being told that they have done wrong.

If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Technical

- Encourage players to try new skills in practice and work out where they can be used in games.
- Practice should replicate the demands of the game and encourage players to think and make decisions just as they would in a match.
- Match the needs of the individual by altering the difficulty using the **STEP** principle (**S**pace, **T**ask, **E**quipment, **P**layers).
- Make use of the “five pillars coaching methods”. Interventions and making coaching points is fundamental but recognise players need to also experience the flow of the game.

'Five Pillars' Coaching Methods					
CONTINUUM					
Coaching methodology	COMMAND (Directive)	QUESTION & ANSWER	OBSERVATION & FEEDBACK	GUIDED DISCOVERY	TRIAL & ERROR
Player/coach interventions	Coach tells & shows required solution.	Coach leads with question to gain response from players.	Coach & players observe.	Coach asks a question or issues a challenge.	Players &/Or coach decide on challenge.
Example	"I want you to!"	"Can you tell me what you can do here?"	"Let's watch this"	"Can you show me..?"	"Try for yourself!"
Description	Coach determines the chosen outcomes in practice.	Coach poses question & players offer verbal solution to challenge.	Players & coach observe & discuss feedback.	Coach prompts & players offer visual demonstration of their personal solution.	Players are encouraged to find solutions with minimal support from coach.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Technical

Use a variety of session designs - Use the right practice for the right players at the right time

- **Constant practices** - Sessions focused on one specific technique requiring little decision making and with no opposition i.e. basic passing sessions focused on one specific technique.
- **Variable practices** - Sessions include more things to think about, for example interference from other players in the session.
- **Random practices** - Perhaps a small-sided game, which becomes more realistic to a match scenario and involves unpredictable moments and competing with opponents. This can help players develop 'game craft'.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Physical

- Appropriate movement skills which develop agility, balance, co-ordination and speed through enjoyable games.
- Using well designed practices, all coaching activities should include physical outcomes.
- Allow for differing growth rates between the players and cater for the needs at both ends of the growth scale.
- Children are not mini-adults and football sessions should not be 'planned' around activities like, laps of the pitch and press ups.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Psychological

Use different methods of communication to engage with different types of learners.

- **Visual (seeing)** - Session plans, tactics boards, cue and prompt cards as well as cones on a pitch.
- **Auditory (hearing)** - Speak with players, ask questions and encourage discussion among team-mates to solve game related problems.
- **Kinaesthetic (doing)** - Demonstration to the team by a coach or by a player to their team-mates.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Social

- Be a good role model for the players.
- Create a positive and welcoming environment.
- Praise players for their effort and endeavour as well as abilities.
- Use descriptive praise to pinpoint what the players have done well.
- Manage mistakes to the player's advantage – understand what they were trying to do. Sometimes they will have the right idea but just fail in the execution of the technique or skill.
- Make sure the sessions are enjoyable but with a purpose.
- Ensure the development of skills and game understanding.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Coaches

Coaches will try recognise and consider ability and manage opinions, many factors will need to be considered as part of this process.

- Always keep in mind that football is a late developing sport and young players will have huge peaks and troughs during their time with you.
- A player's performance in practice and matches can be influenced by the following factors, all of which need to be considered when forming an opinion of a player's true ability. In aiding player development all these factors will be considered.

- Date of Birth
- Body Type
- Adolescent Growth Spurt
- Physical Maturity
- Psychological Maturity
- Social Maturity
- Opposition
- Own Team's Playing Standard
- Position Suitability
- Instructions Given to Player
- Recent Playing Experience

"Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid"

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Recognise growth and maturation

- Appreciate that all players are growing and maturing at different rates.
- Be patient, supportive and encouraging with ALL the players in the squad.
- Understand that all some players need is 'time'.
- Won't mistake levels of physical maturity for maturity in other areas.
- Won't assume that the current success of a player is an indicator of on-going proficiency.
- Won't over-burden the players that represent the extreme early or late developer.
- Recognise when players are going through a learning spurt and challenge them to continue to grow.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Relative Age Effect

- Recruitment trends in professional academies show a bias towards players born between Sept-Dec, making them the older players in their age group.
- Encourage the younger players to use technique rather than try to compete physically, they will catch up physically through puberty.
- Coaches will design and deliver challenges which offset the relative age effect
- Consider changing the pitch size, the size of the ball, rules of the practice/game, the game format.
- Consider grouping bigger and physically developed players to compete against each other in practice.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Managing Behaviour

- Outline rights and responsibilities to players.
- Praise and reward good behaviour.
- If you have to intervene, do so in a calm and controlled manner.
- If boundaries are consistently broken, then there should be a consequence.
- Be consistent in dealing with behaviour issues.
- As a coach, remember the only person's behaviour you can control is your own, so set a good example.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Minimizing Distractions

- By planning ahead, the coach can create an environment that minimises distractions and helps players to stay 'on-task' for longer.
- Organise sessions that are interesting, challenging, varied and enjoyable.
- Avoid players being stood in line or asking them to wait around for too long without a focus.
- Plan arrival activities so players can begin practising as soon as they arrive.



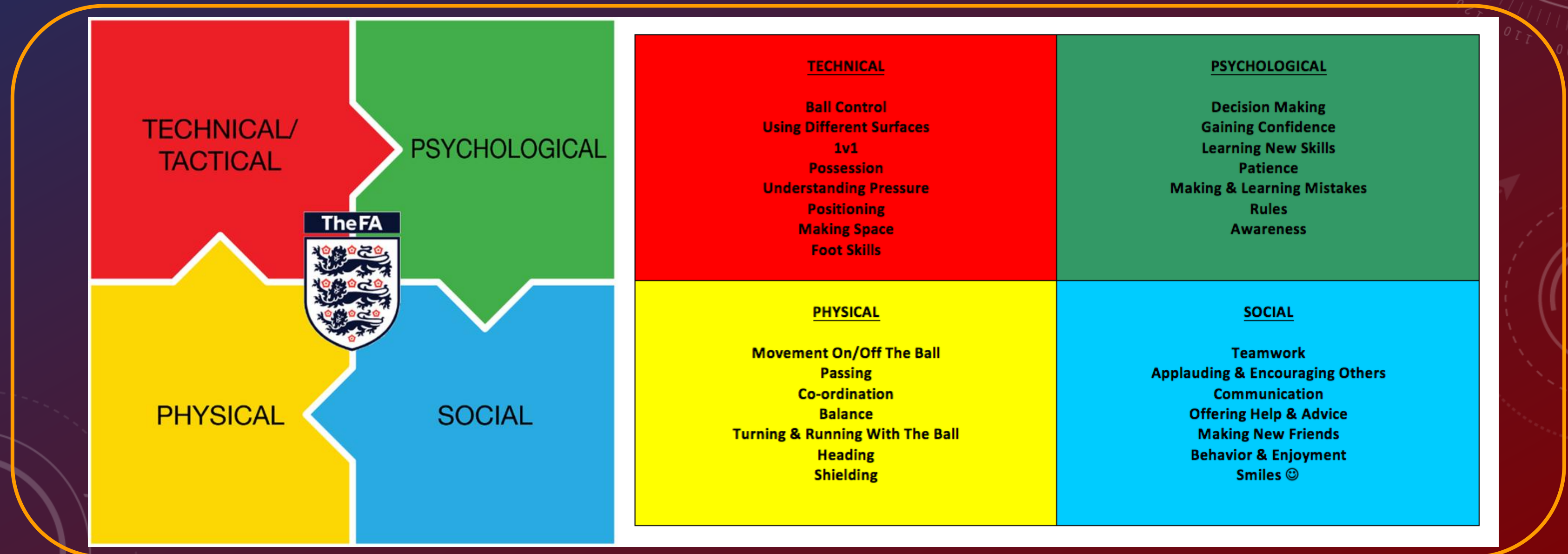
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

SECTION 6

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

FA Four Corner Model

We promote a holistic approach to player development based on the FA's four-corner model for long term player development.



PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Player Support

We provide various forms of support to the player, as part of their development journey.



PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Coaching Recommendations for Players - 5 to 11

Creating a positive and enjoyable learning environment which prioritises skill development, decision-making, fundamental movement skills and experimentation is crucial for young players in this age-group who are learning how to play.

Positive Learning Environment

- Encourage players to be creative and take considered risks in both practice and games.
- Remember – mistakes do happen.
- Let players make some of the decisions.
- Let them know that their opinions count too.
- Create opportunities for players to explore, question and foster their natural curiosity and imagination.
- Allow all players to experience success.

Let the Players Play

- All children should be given fair playing time on match-day.
- Help players develop their game-understanding by rotating positions during practice and games.
- Ensure players are given the chance to play a 'game' during every practice session.
- Utilise the 'Whole-Part-Whole' method of coaching during sessions
- Don't let the children's arena become dominated by adults. You are the coach not the parents.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Coaching Recommendations for Players - 5 to 11

Skill Development and Decision Making

- Practice should replicate the demands of the 'game' as much as possible. Give lots of opportunities to practice different aspects of the game (shooting, dribbling, tackling, passing, goalkeeping), in context.
- Avoid one-dimensional coaching.
- Small-sided games on appropriate sized pitches provide young players with opposition, decision-making and challenge, all of which help their skill development.

Themed Sessions

Try and link the different parts of a coaching practice together.

For example,

- **Warm-up** - Player's work in twos passing through a variety of different sized gates, using different techniques and surfaces of the foot.
- **Skill development** - Play a small-sided possession game (e.g. 3v1 or 4v2) on appropriate sized pitch.
- **Game** - Any 4v4 game with a focus on passing or a through-the-thirds game.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Coaching Recommendations for Players - 5 to 11

Appropriate Challenges

- Set challenges in practice sessions, e.g. Use your weaker foot when you next can in practice.
- Reinforce the learning focus from practice sessions on match day.
- Set players specific challenges that link to the theme of a recent practice session, which can be discussed at half-time and after the game.
- During practice sessions try to 'match' players up in lots of different ways in order to meet their individual needs.

Develop Fundamental Movement Skills

- Between the ages of 5-11 players have a 'window of opportunity' to develop their agility, balance, co- ordination and speed (ABCs).
- Coaches should be creative in their practice design and build in a physical benefit for the players, e.g. Tag Games, Running and Dodging, Throwing and Catching and Jumping and Balancing.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Coaching Recommendations for Players - 5 to 11

Use Small Sided Games

- Players should experience a variety of formats of the game, played on appropriately sized pitches.
- The game is essentially a series of different scenarios (1v1, 2v1, 1v2, 3v2 etc.) and players should experience a variety of these game-like challenges during practice sessions.
- Coaches should use uneven sides in practice as a tool to challenge the players.

Appreciate what it is like to be young

- What the game of football 'looks' like for a group of 7-8-year-olds, will be significantly different to the game played by older players and adults.
- If a coach tries to 'fast-forward' young players to this level too quickly, important stages of development may be missed.
- Young players shouldn't be benchmarked against adult professional players.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Coaching Recommendations for Players - 5 to 11

Things to Avoid

- Don't impose unrealistic adult expectations on young players.
- Don't be so intent on winning games that young players miss out on the opportunities to learn and fall in love with the game.
- Don't apply 'out-dated' coaching methods with young players.
- Avoid children standing in lines or queuing.

Use a Variety of Interventions

- Young players don't enjoy being shouted at, having their mistakes highlighted or having to stop playing the game to listen to the coach talk at length.
- A variety of coaching methods should be used to help players learn the game. Refer to the Coaching Philosophy Section.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Coaching Recommendations for Players - 12 to 16

Coaches should continue to prioritise a positive learning environment (as recommended in the 5-11 section), ensuring methods and content are made appropriate to the age and ability of the players in this age-range.

Deliver Relevant and Realistic Practices

- Realistic passing, receiving and possession practices which create appropriate pressure, interference and distraction will help young players develop their awareness and game understanding.
- Become more effective 'off the ball'. Develop an understanding of movement to support team-mates and how to create and exploit space.
- Develop scanning, predicting and assessing skills to form a 'picture' before receiving the ball.

Develop Technical Understanding

Introduce players to the 6 phases of the game

- Attacking when opponents are 'in balance'
- Attacking when opponents are 'out of balance'
- Defensive play whilst 'in balance'
- Defensive play whilst 'out of balance'
- The finishing phase
- Goalkeeping

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Coaching Recommendations for Players - 12 to 16

Introduce Position Specific Practices

- As players get older, they will begin to recognise the significance of practice sessions to their role within the team.
- Some specific positional practices should be introduced as appropriate.
- This should be balanced with experience playing and practising in different positions.

Encourage Players to be Self-Reflective

- Players should be encouraged to reflect on their effectiveness in practice and games and challenged to think about how they may improve next time.
- This process may be done individually, in small groups or collectively.
- It may be enhanced if the team/player and the coach discuss realistic and achievable challenges and goals to work towards.

Encourage Creativity

- Coaches should continue to encourage players in this age group to be creative by designing challenging practice sessions.
- Master the skill of posing effective questions to develop the players' active involvement in the training and learning process.
- Encourage players to think, examine, judge and evaluate to find their own solutions.

Cramlington United Football Club



MARK HEDLEY

Youth Module Award - UEFA B License

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