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FOREWORD

BY MOLEFI NTSEKI

Football has long been known as “the beautiful game” for the joy, passion, and sense of possibility it brings to people from all walks of life. For many young people, football is more than a game – it is a source of belonging, purpose, expression, and hope.

Football development, therefore, begins long before players reach the professional level. It begins in communities, schools, clubs, academies, and training environments, where young people build confidence, discipline, teamwork, responsibility, and character.

South Africa continues to produce talented footballers with enormous potential. But talent alone is not enough. A persistent challenge in our football is ensuring that young players are properly supported from an early age through qualified coaches, appropriate structures, and clear development pathways. Having worked across different levels of the game, including academy and youth development structures, I have seen firsthand how important strong coaching foundations and the right developmental environments are in shaping young players.

Coaching is a huge responsibility at any level of the game. Beyond tactics and technical ability, coaches shape how players think, learn, compete, respond to challenges, and conduct themselves on and off the field. In the early stages of development, this responsibility is even greater. Without the right foundation, even the most talented young players can struggle to reach their full potential.

What makes this manual particularly valuable is that it moves beyond theory and philosophy. It is a holistic, practical developmental resource that offers structured guidance, coaching tools, reflection exercises, and age-appropriate principles for real-world football settings. At a time when football increasingly requires stronger coaching foundations, better learning environments, and greater investment in long-term player development, this contribution is both relevant and much needed.

Importantly, the manual recognises that a youth coach is far more than a football instructor. Coaches are educators, mentors, role models, and guides who shape how young players learn, grow, behave, and experience the game. Its emphasis on communication, relationships, safeguarding, player well-being, and reflective coaching reflects a progressive, deeply human approach to youth football.

Coach Pitso Mosimane's achievements across Africa and the Middle East, together with his hands-on experience at the highest levels of the game, uniquely qualify him to produce South Africa's first comprehensive youth football coaching manual.

I applaud him for this important contribution to youth football development and coaching education.

Molefi Ntseki

South African Football Association (SAFA) Technical Director





HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is designed to support you in your role as a coach. It is practical, simple to follow, and focused on helping you apply what you learn on the field. Whether you coach in a township, on a rural field, at a school, or in a club, this book will help you become a better coach and give your players the best experience possible.

Each chapter is structured to help you learn quickly and apply your knowledge:

- Learning outcomes show what you should understand by the end of the chapter
- Key messages for coaches highlight the most important ideas
- Coach tips give you practical advice you can use immediately
- Try this sections suggest simple actions for your next session
- Reflection questions help you think about your coaching and improve over time
- Checklists help you stay organised and prepared
- Key words explain important terms in simple language
- Sections for coaches who want to understand more are clearly marked – skip them if you are not ready and come back later

GLOSSARY

At the end of the book, you will find a glossary – a list of all the important words and what they mean. If you see a word you do not understand, check the glossary. A glossary appears near the end of each chapter too.

HOW THIS BOOK IS STRUCTURED

SECTION	THEME	WHAT IT COVERS
Chapter 1	Introduction	Why football matters, who this guide is for, and how it aligns with key development frameworks (SAFA, CAF, UEFA, FIFA, and LTPD).
Chapters 2–4	Foundations	The philosophy of youth football, the role of the coach, and the role of parents in supporting young players.
Chapters 5–8	Core principles	Long-Term Player Development (LTPD), physical development, age-appropriate coaching, and training sessions.
Chapters 9–13	Development phases	Five key phases from Fun to Learn (6–9 years old) through to Compete to Win (16–19 years old), each with coaching priorities, sample sessions, and practical guidelines.
Chapter 14	Goalkeeper development	Practical guidance on how to train goalkeepers holistically within the team environment.
Chapter 15	Conclusion	A call to action – reflecting on your coaching journey and your commitment to developing the whole player.

The best way to use this book is to:

- Read one small section at a time.
- Apply one or two ideas in your next session.
- Reflect on what worked and what you can improve.
- Return to sections as your players grow and your coaching develops.

Coaching is a process. You do not need to be perfect. You just need to be willing to learn, try, and improve – step by step.



WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS CHAPTER

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- explain why football matters.
- understand the purpose of this guide.
- identify who this guide is for.
- recognise the value of inclusive, child-centred coaching.
- understand how this guide aligns with key development frameworks, including SAFA, CAF, UEFA, FIFA, and LTPD.

CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

“

My vision is to **create the player of tomorrow** by developing young talent, training youth-development coaches, and creating opportunities that inspire the next generation of players to dream big.

”

Pitso Mosimane



01

BACKGROUND: WHY FOOTBALL MATTERS

Football is the biggest sport in the world. Millions of people play it and love it. But why? Because it is simple. You do not need expensive equipment. You just need a ball, some space, and a group of friends. For young people, it is far more than a game. It is a culture, a classroom, and a way of life.

“My favourite memory is playing “Chaelense” in the streets of Soweto – our local twist on the word “challenge”. It was not just a game; it was a time for fun, improving our football skills, earning respect, and forming lifelong bonds. From those streets, football took me to Greece, Qatar, and Belgium. It has shaped who I am and left an indelible mark on my spirit.”

Pitso Mosimane



“

As coaches, we have a unique responsibility towards all the young boys and girls whose hearts beat for football. We must help them realise their dreams of becoming fine football players and perhaps even playing in a great team one day. There is much undiscovered talent in developing countries, and we need more coaches to discover and develop it.

Pitso Mosimane

”



WHAT FOOTBALL DOES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Sharpens cognitive skills and decision-making
- Instils discipline, resilience, confidence, and teamwork
- Promotes inclusion, personal growth, and a sense of identity
- Influences not only individual lives but also communities and nations
- Provides a pathway to the professional game – but is valuable even if it never leads there

FOOTBALL AROUND THE WORLD TODAY

Today, football is one of the most popular sports in the world, particularly among young people. However, there are still many challenges, especially in developing countries. These include weak grassroots structures, limited resources, and development systems that do not always work well together.

Even with these challenges, many developing countries continue to produce talented players. In South Africa, for example, clubs such as Orlando Pirates, Kaizer Chiefs, and Mamelodi Sundowns are major forces in African football.

South Africa has many young people who love football, as well as a strong football culture. This gives the country a real opportunity to become a global leader in youth football development. But to do this, it needs better systems, better coach education, and stronger teamwork between schools, clubs, and academies. This may be true in other countries too.



**SELF-
EXPRESSION**

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Youth football in developing countries has huge potential, but it is not always developed in the right way. In townships, rural fields, and school grounds, talented young players often play without enough structure, support, or long-term planning.



**FOR BOYS &
GIRLS**

This guide was created to help solve that problem. It gives coaches, teachers, parents, and football leaders a clear plan for youth football development, no matter where they are in the world. It is based on child-centred learning, proven coaching methods, and international best practice.



STRUCTURE

The guide is designed for both boys and girls. Every child deserves equal access to good football education. It is based on the experiences of young players, the knowledge of experts, and the best ideas from around the world. Most importantly, it is inspired by children's voices. They remind us that football is about joy, friendship, self-expression, and belonging.

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

This guide is designed to support all individuals and institutions involved in the development of young footballers. Each audience will find tools, principles, and practices that help create safe, nurturing, and development-oriented football environments.



Youth football coaches
seeking structured guidance and
practical tools for every session.



Parents and guardians
who play an important role in shaping
their child's football experiences.



Teachers and sports coordinators
who play a critical role integrating football
into learning, discipline and teamwork.



Club directors and academy managers
responsible for building long-term
athlete development.



**Community programme leaders
and mentors**
who foster participation and
access at the grassroots level.



Governments and corporates
who scale football's social, educational,
and economic impact.



ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

This guide is aligned with the **South African Football Association (SAFA) youth development framework** and draws on global best practices from leading football bodies.

It draws on principles of **Long-Term Player Development (LTPD)** and **age-appropriate coaching**. It reflects models used by elite academies and incorporates validated international research.

THIS GUIDE IS ALSO ALIGNED WITH:

- ✓ **CAF** – Confederation of African Football – continental best practices
- ✓ **UEFA** – Union of European Football Associations – European development models
- ✓ **FIFA** – Fédération Internationale de Football Association – global standards

A CALL TO ACTION



This guide is more than a teaching resource – it is an invitation to transform youth football in developing countries around the world. I invite every coach, parent, educator, and administrator to reflect on their role in shaping young lives, to adopt child-first values and coaching principles that are aligned to LTPD and age-appropriate training, to commit to personal and professional growth, and to build systems that elevate both participation and excellence.

As **Nelson Mandela** said, *“Sport has the power to change the world.”* Together, through intentional, principled football development, we can shape a new generation of confident, capable, and compassionate young people.

Let’s raise the game – starting from the ground up.



KEY MESSAGES FOR COACHES

- Football develops the whole child – not just the player.
- Put the child first in every session, decision, and interaction.
- Ensure every child has equal access to play, learn, and grow – boys and girls alike.
- Align your coaching with age-appropriate, Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) principles.
- You are more than a coach – you are a mentor shaping lives, communities, and the future of football.



Football is the only sport where you put people together, it doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, or black or white. It is one nation.
This is the beauty of football.

Pelé,
World Player of the Century (IFFHS)
and FIFA Player of the Century





KEY WORDS IN THIS CHAPTER

age-appropriate coaching – coaching methods and activities that suit the age and stage of the players

child-centred coaching – coaching that puts the needs, safety, enjoyment, and development of the child first

framework – a clear plan that guides how something should be done

grassroots football – football played at local community, school, or beginner level

inclusive coaching – coaching that gives all children a fair chance to take part, learn, and grow

Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) – an approach that helps players develop step by step over time

potential – the natural ability or qualities that can be developed in the future

self-expression – showing your ideas, feelings, and personality through the way you play and behave

youth development – the process of helping young players grow in skill, confidence, behaviour, and understanding





CHAPTER SUMMARY

- ✓ Football is the world's largest participation sport – its power lies in its simplicity and its ability to change lives.
- ✓ Developing countries have enormous football potential, but need structured systems, better coach education, and alignment between schools, clubs, and academies.
- ✓ This guide was developed to give coaches a practical, structured, and holistic approach to youth football development.
- ✓ It is designed for coaches, parents, teachers, club directors, governments, community leaders, and corporates.
- ✓ It is aligned with SAFA, CAF, UEFA, FIFA, and the Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) framework.
- ✓ The goal is simple: develop the player of tomorrow – starting from the ground up.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Think about why you started coaching. What was your “Chaelense” moment – the memory that made you fall in love with football?
2. What does “child-centred coaching” mean to you in practice? How does it show up in your sessions?
3. What is one challenge in your local football environment that this guide might help you address?
4. Pitso says football is “a culture, a classroom, and a way of life.” Do you agree? How does that shape the way you coach?



ACTION POINTS DO THIS BEFORE YOUR NEXT SESSION

1. Write down your personal coaching vision in one sentence. What do you want your players to say about you in 10 years?
2. Identify one challenge in your local football environment. Write down one thing you could do – however small – to start addressing it.
3. Read the guide structure on the previous page. Mark the chapters that are most relevant to the age group you currently coach.
4. Share Pitso's vision quote with your team or fellow coaches.
5. Discuss what “creating the player of tomorrow” means to each of you.



WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS CHAPTER

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- explain what good youth football is and why it matters.
- use the four key principles of youth coaching: fun, safety, learning, and character.
- explain why youth football is different from professional football.
- identify what a strong and caring football environment looks like.
- understand why a good foundation helps young players grow into better players and better people.

CHAPTER

THE FOUNDATION OF YOUTH FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT

“

The best youth development coaches possess a unique skill set. They don't just understand football – they understand young people.

Pitso Mosimane

”

02



THE PHILOSOPHY OF YOUTH FOOTBALL

My vision is to cultivate a sustainable football ecosystem that prioritises enjoyment, inclusion, and long-term development over short-term performance results. To grow football, we must put children first.

This is not just a nice idea – it is the foundation of everything in this guide. When coaches understand and believe in this philosophy, everything else falls into place.

THE FIVE CORE PILLARS OF THIS PHILOSOPHY



“

In football, you either win or you learn from your mistakes.

Pitso Mosimane

”



WHY A SOLID FOUNDATION MATTERS

Building a strong foundation means children learn the game in a way that is right for their age and fun to do. Coaches must focus on helping players grow over a long time, not just winning the next game. When we do this right, football becomes a way to help the whole community – especially in places that need more support.

Laying this foundation is not just about having fields and balls. It needs a clear plan and coaches who are truly committed to the players. This chapter gives you the tools to build a pipeline of players who are skilled, confident, and well-supported. These players will be ready to succeed in the game and in life.

WHAT DO CHILDREN ACTUALLY WANT FROM FOOTBALL?

According to Nick Levett of the English Football Association, children participate in sport mainly for the love of the game, social connections, and health – not competition.

At PMYF (Pitso Mosimane Youth Football), we ran a simple but powerful survey in June 2024 to understand what football means to our young players. Their answers were unanimous.

Our players said football is about:

- Fun and excitement
- Skill development and learning
- Friendship and teamwork
- Kindness of coaches
- Confidence, happiness, and discipline
- Respect, fitness, and safety

Not one child mentioned winning trophies or medals as their main reason for playing.

The diagram below shows some of the reasons kids play football.

Teal: Answers most children chose
Red: Answers that only some children chose
Brown: Answers that were not chosen at all

Why kids play football			
Trying my hardest is more important than winning	It is important to me to try to win matches	I like meeting new friends through football	I like to show off my skills
It is important to me to win trophies and medals	I like playing football with my friends	I like dribbling the ball	It's a really good game and I love it!
I love playing football because it is fun	Winning is more important than trying my hardest	It keeps me fit and healthy	It's important to me that we win the league
I really like scoring or stopping goals	I like playing matches against other teams	I like learning new skills	I play because it makes my parents happy

At the heart of effective youth football development lies a commitment to more than just the game itself. It is rooted in four foundational principles: **fun, safety, learning, and character-building**. Together, these pillars create an environment where young players can thrive – developing not only their football skills but also growing as individuals.

1

FUN

Fun is the foundation of youth football. Enjoyment keeps players engaged, motivated, and eager to improve. Coaches must tailor training to each age group's interests, using creative, game-like activities that promote exploration and joy. A fun environment builds confidence, encourages self-expression, and helps young players form a lifelong love for the game.



If the kids are not smiling, something needs to change.

2

SAFETY

Safety – both physical and emotional – is essential for learning and growth. When players feel secure, they are more open to challenges and development. A safe environment means no bullying, no shaming, and no fear of making mistakes. Players who feel safe take risks, try new things, and grow faster.



A child who is afraid of being shouted at will never play freely.

3

LEARNING

Every session should teach something – a skill, a habit, a way of thinking. Learning in youth football is not just about technique. It includes decision-making, resilience, communication, and how to handle both success and failure. Mistakes are not problems – they are the most powerful learning tool a coach has.



Praise the effort, not just the results. “Good try – now let’s see what you can do differently.”

4

CHARACTER-BUILDING

Football is one of the best tools we have for building character. Respect, discipline, teamwork, patience – these are life skills, not just football skills. When applied consistently, these elements foster long-term engagement, build resilience, and equip young players with the tools they need both on and off the pitch.



The player you develop as a person will outlast the player you develop on the pitch.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE AT EACH AGE

Training should match the age of the player. As players grow older, training should grow with them – step by step.

At each age, what you teach must fit what the player’s body and mind are ready for. Think of it like school: you do not teach Grade 10 work to a Grade 3 learner. Football development works the same way.

AGE GROUP	PHASE	DEVELOPMENT FOCUS	KEY OBJECTIVES
6 – 9	Fun to Learn	Basic football skills	Joy, exploration and love for the game
9 – 11	Learn to Play	Basic technique	Teamwork, confidence, and emotional safety
11 – 14	Play to Improve	Positional understanding	Decision-making
14 – 16	Improve to Compete	High-level technique	Physical growth, resilience, discipline
16 – 19	Compete to Win	Performance	Mental toughness, career planning





CHAPTER

LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

“

The future of African football lies in teaching kids the basics early.

”

Abedi Pele,
three-time African Footballer of the Year

05

WHAT IS LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT?

In youth football, the goal is long-term growth – not short-term results. Professional football is about winning. Youth football is about building. You are not trying to win the next tournament. You are trying to develop the next generation of confident, skilful, and well-rounded players.

To help you do this, there is a framework called the **Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) Model**. It is also known as the **Four-Corner Model**. This model gives you a guide for coaching that fits the age and stage of each player – covering not just football skills, but the whole person.

It asks you one important question:

**“Is what I am coaching right for the age
and stage of this player?”**

That is the question we will explore in this chapter.





WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS CHAPTER

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand why physical development is the foundation of youth football.
- identify the six physical pillars every young player needs – and what each one means.
- plan movement-based activities that fit each age group.
- recognise the most common mistakes coaches make with physical training – and how to avoid them.
- explain how physical development connects to all four corners of the player development model.
- understand why your role is to be a teacher of movement, not a fitness instructor.

CHAPTER

PHYSICAL **DEVELOPMENT** **BUILDING THE PLAYER** **FROM THE GROUND UP**

“

The best young players are not the fastest or the strongest. They are the ones who move with control, confidence, and joy. That is what we must build first.

”

Pitso Mosimane

06

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT IS THE FIRST LANGUAGE OF FOOTBALL

Physical development is the first language of football. It is how young players explore their environment, express their creativity, build confidence, and develop a relationship with the ball, their bodies, and the game itself.

When physical training is done well, it does not feel like conditioning. It feels like play with purpose. Physical development is not something separate from football. It is woven into every training session. It is delivered through football-specific activities that respect the child's stage of growth and development.



COACH TIP

If your physical activities do not include a ball or a football-related challenge, ask yourself: "Can I redesign this so it still develops movement but feels like football?" Almost always, the answer is yes.

MOVEMENT BEFORE MUSCLE

Before players understand tactics, before they recognise space, and before they master technique – they learn the game **through movement**.

A key principle of youth physical development is simple: Children are not small adults.

Young players do not need early strength programmes, intense conditioning, or repetitive fitness drills. What they need is the chance to learn how to move well – efficiently, confidently, and with joy.

As a coach, you should prioritise:

- Fundamental movement skills (running, jumping, hopping, skipping)
- Balance and coordination
- Rhythm and sequencing of movements
- Spatial awareness – knowing where you are on the field
- Gradual, age-appropriate exposure to physical fitness

When you build these foundations early, players are ready to handle higher physical demands later. Their bodies are prepared – safely and effectively.



COACH TIP

Think of movement skills like learning to read. You start with letters (basic movements), then words (combinations), then sentences (game actions). You cannot skip the letters.

THE SIX PHYSICAL PILLARS OF YOUTH FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT

Physical development in youth football can be understood through six connected pillars. These pillars change and grow across age groups, but their foundations are laid early and reinforced consistently.

Each pillar contributes not only to physical performance but also to psychological confidence, social interaction, and technical execution.

PILLAR 1 LOCOMOTOR SKILLS – LEARNING TO MOVE THROUGH SPACE

Locomotor skills include running, jumping, hopping, skipping, stopping, starting, and changing direction. These movements form the base of almost every football action.

In football, locomotion underpins:

- Pressing and recovery runs
- Defensive tracking
- Attacking movement off the ball

Well-developed locomotion allows players to move efficiently – not just quickly. A player who moves well can change direction, accelerate, and decelerate under control.





COACH CALL-OUT: WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Can the player accelerate and decelerate under control?
- Do they move smoothly between different actions?
- Are their changes of direction balanced, or rushed and clumsy?

COACH CALL-OUT: COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Focusing too much on speed before the player can move with quality
- Long, straight-line running without a football context
- Ignoring posture and braking mechanics (how players slow down and stop)

PILLAR 2 BALANCE AND POSTURE CONTROL – STAYING STRONG UNDER PRESSURE

Balance allows players to stay in control of their bodies during movement, physical contact, and when they interact with the ball. There are two kinds of balance:

- Static balance – holding a position (for example, standing on one leg)
- Dynamic balance – staying in control while moving (for example, turning with the ball)

In football, balance supports:

- A good first touch under pressure
- Accurate shooting and passing
- Stability during tackles and when jumping for headers



COACH CALL-OUT: WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Can the player strike the ball without falling over?
- Do they recover quickly after physical contact?
- Is their body aligned during movement – not leaning too far forward or sideways?

COACH CALL-OUT: COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Stopping balance work once players “look coordinated”
- Treating balance exercises as separate from football actions
- Over-correcting the player instead of allowing them to learn naturally

CHAPTER

FUN TO LEARN PHASE

(6–9 YEARS OLD)

“

At the Wolves academy, when you're around six to eight years old, the sessions focus more on enjoyment, developing movement skills, and fostering a love for the game.

”

Joshua Mandlenkosi Nyakudya,
former Wolves Academy player

09

“ I want to put the emphasis on the word FUN. That is why we write it as FUNdamental. Both words matter – fundamental skills AND fun. You cannot have one without the other at this age. ”

Pitso Mosimane

WHERE THE JOURNEY BEGINS

The **Fun to Learn** phase is where every young player starts. It covers children aged **6 to 9 years**. At this age, football must be **fun, playful**, and full of **imagination**. The goal is not to produce skilled players – it is to build a love for the game that lasts a lifetime.

Your job as a coach is to help children develop **basic movement skills, simple football techniques**, and – most importantly – a genuine **love of the game**.



We have adapted the popular term in LTPD, which is the FUNdamental Phase. I want to put the emphasis on the word FUN.

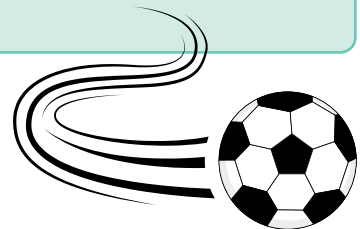
This has been intentionally capitalised to highlight both the words fundamental and FUN.

Pitso Mosimane



KEY OBJECTIVES

- Build agility, balance, coordination, and speed through movement games
- Introduce basic football skills using fun, play-based activities
- Encourage creativity, confidence, and risk-taking in a safe space
- Build teamwork, communication, and respect through play





PHASE OVERVIEW

The **Fun to Learn** phase is the foundation for all future football learning. Children at this age are growing fast – both physically and mentally. Your job as a coach is to create an environment where players are active, having fun, and free to explore their skills. At this stage, enjoyment and participation matter far more than competition or results.

AGE-SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

Children aged 6–9 are not mini-adults. They have short attention spans, big imaginations, and a deep need for fun. Knowing what makes this age group tick will help you plan sessions that actually work.

WHAT CHILDREN ARE LIKE	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU AS A COACH
High energy and enthusiasm	Keep sessions active and varied – use this energy
Short attention spans	Change activities every 10–15 minutes
Still developing basic motor skills	Focus on running, jumping, turning, and balance
Need praise and encouragement	Give frequent, specific, positive feedback
Strong imagination	Use themed games and creative challenges
Naturally self-centred	Use multiple balls and small groups (2v2, 3v3)

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Coaching in this phase must be **player-centred** and **games-based**. Your role is to create an environment where every child feels **safe, included**, and **excited to participate**.



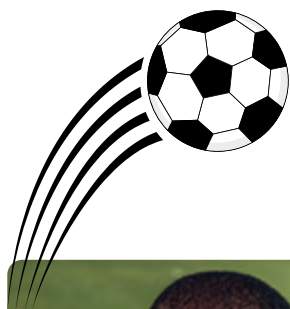
KEY PRINCIPLES

- Make **fun and enjoyment** the main goal of every session
- Make sure every player gets **as much time with the ball as possible**
- Use **games and challenges** that let children explore and be creative
- Give **positive, specific feedback** – praise effort, not just results



KEY MESSAGES FOR COACHES

- You are not building professional players – you are building people who love football
- Let kids be kids; structure and tactics can come later
- Your job is to keep them in the game, not to chase trophies
- What you do here impacts whether players continue to play – or quit



6–9

FUN TO LEARN

SAMPLE SESSION

MAXIMUM TRAINING SESSION TIME:
45–60 MINUTES

MAXIMUM SIZED GAME:
4V4 (“SMALL” SSG)

TOPIC:
MAXIMISING BALL TOUCHES
(16 PLAYERS)

EXERCISE 1 – 10-15 MINUTES – BALL MASTERY & ABC WARM-UP X2



CONSTANT BALL MASTERY – 1 BALL : 2 PLAYERS

DESCRIPTION OF SESSION

Players dribble and slalom through their row of cones. Oranges and Greens use orange cones, Blacks and Whites use blue cones. When they get to the end they must turn back, dribble “home”, then Player 2 will take their turn.

Maximum two players per team for good work : rest ratio.

COACHING POINTS

Play with head up.

Use all surfaces of both feet.

Prioritise good control, before increasing the speed.

Be mindful of any “traffic” from other groups that are dribbling at the same time.

PROGRESSIONS

Create a race to see which team can get all their players “home” first.

Challenge players – use left foot or right foot only, use sole only, etc.

EXERCISE 2 – 10-15 MINUTES – 1V1 (SMALL SSG) X2



1V1 PROMOTION / RELEGATION LINE GAME

DESCRIPTION OF SESSION

Players play 1v1 inside their designated playing area. Goals are scored by stopping the ball on the opponent's end line. Play for 1–2 minutes. The winner moves right towards the 4-star pitch, the losers left towards the 1-star pitch.

COACHING POINTS

Defending principles
Attacking principles

PROGRESSIONS

A player can score at one end, then immediately turn and attack the opposite end line.



WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS CHAPTER

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand how the role of the goalkeeper has evolved in the modern game.
- apply the Four Corner Model to goalkeeper development.
- identify the key technical, tactical, physical, mental, and social skills of elite goalkeepers.
- explain the differences between training skills alone, training with some game elements, and training within a full team practice.
- design goalkeeper training that fits the player's age and follows the Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) stages.
- use monitoring and evaluation tools to track a goalkeeper's progress in all areas, including physical, mental, and technical skills.

CHAPTER

DEVELOPING THE MODERN GOALKEEPER

“

I would say the keeper is the most important player on the team, more than a striker; the keeper is fundamental.

”

Pep Guardiola,
UEFA Champions League-winning coach

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“The goalkeeper is not just the last line of defence – they are the first line of attack. A goalkeeper who can distribute, organise, and lead changes the entire dynamic of your team. Develop them like you develop your best outfield players.”

Pitso Mosimane

MORE THAN A SHOT-STOPPER

The modern game needs a goalkeeper who is more than just a shot-stopper. Today's goalkeeper must also be a tactician, a distributor (passer), a communicator, and an athlete. The position has changed because of new tactics, rule changes, and the growing use of data in football. Because of this, youth coaches must now develop goalkeepers with a wide range of skills that go beyond the traditional role. This chapter gives you a clear framework for understanding and developing the modern goalkeeper using the Four Corner Model.





KEY OBJECTIVES

- Understand how the role of the goalkeeper has evolved in the modern game.
- Apply the Four Corner Model to the development of goalkeepers.
- Examine how technical, tactical, physical, mental, and social skills shape elite goalkeepers.
- Learn to tailor training methodologies (isolated, semi-integrated, integrated) for holistic development.
- Recognise the importance of age-appropriate training aligned with Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) stages.

AGE-APPROPRIATE GOALKEEPER DEVELOPMENT (LTPD)

LTPD PHASE	AGE RANGE	KEY FOCUS AREAS	COACHING NOTES
Fun to Learn	6–9 years	Basic coordination. Catching, diving, footwork. Balance and agility.	Playful, non-pressured environment. Instil love for goalkeeping. Early interest may be fleeting.
Learn to Play	9–11 years	Technical repetition. Handling and positioning. Basic decision-making.	Introduce structured technique with fun. Use cues like when to catch/punch.
Play to Improve	11–14 years	Tactical awareness. Anticipation and reading the game. Game-like scenarios.	Begin realistic match scenarios with defenders & attackers. Build resilience.
Improve to Compete	14–16 years	Team tactical integration. Distribution under pressure. Dealing with crosses. Sweeper-keeper role.	Focus on physical and mental toughness. Train leadership and decision-making
Compete to Win	16–19 years	Senior-level readiness. Tactical mastery. Video analysis. Set-pieces. Individual feedback.	Refine all aspects of performance. Prepare for high-level match conditions.

