



Alexandria Soccer Association
Travel Soccer Program

PHILOSOPHY

Our primary focus is to develop technically and tactically-sound players capable of making confident and proper decisions within the flow of the game. We expect players to be competitive in matches; however, winning is a secondary goal at our youngest age groups. Through our structured and progressive curriculum, players learn how to solve soccer problems creatively and skillfully. In addition, soccer is a cognitive game that requires players to choose the right solutions before executing using the correct technique. Therefore, from the earliest ages, coaches emphasize both smart decision-making (tactical) AND correct technique (technical) to gain confidence and improve execution in the game environment.

STYLE OF PLAY

Starting at the earliest ages, players are introduced to our “progressive possession” style of play. Progressive progression refers to keeping possession of the ball for the purpose of finding and exploiting opportunities to attack forward whenever possible. Teams are expected to build attacks from the back, which means utilizing our goalkeeper and defenders to cycle the ball and switch the point of attack to find areas of the field where we hold numerical superiority. As the ball is moved up the field and closer to our opponent’s goal, we encourage players to show more creativity and take 1v1 or 2v1 chances to generate scoring chances. When the ball is lost, we want player to instantly transition to a defensive mentality of pressing quickly and winning the ball back as soon as possible to limit counterattacks.

In order to stay true to our style of play, coaches train players to learn and execute our “progressive possession” style of play in both practices and games. Early on, players will make costly mistakes early and often, especially as they learn how to build attacks from our goalkeeper and defenders. We don’t want to discourage players to make and learn from their mistakes. Our teams will inevitably lose games to teams that play a more direct and less skillful style of play (playing long balls forward towards our goal and using big and fast players to score) at our youngest travel age groups. While our route to playing a possession-oriented style of play may take longer to show results in the win-loss column, our teams will begin to execute consistently and start to surpass these types of teams as they get older when positive results create more opportunities for our players. In communicating our philosophy and expectations to our young players, we will focus on a limited number of points. Those points are as follows:

- **Possession:** Do have a chance to go penetrate forward? If not, let’s work to not give the ball away!
- **Movement:** Are teammates without the ball providing a left, right, and split option for the player with the ball?
- **Good decision-making:** Is a player establishing a good body position before receiving the ball to see the field and make a decision BEFORE the ball gets to him/her? Is the player choosing the correct option based on the game situation?

DIDACTICS & METHODOLOGY

We encourage our coaches to use their playing experience and coaching “toolbox” to maximize learning in the training and game environment. The ASA technical staff believes in a “player-centered” approach that places the coach in a guiding role rather than the central figure in a session. By properly manipulating the requirements and constraints within training activities, coaches will provide players with an optimal amount of technical and tactical repetitions in game-like situations. As a result, players learn how to recognize common and repeating patterns in the game and how to use proper technique to solve soccer problems on the field. Last (and most important!), teaching players within competitive and fast-paced games promotes intrinsic motivation to play and have fun!