



GALAXY ALLIANCE SOCCER CLUB

GASC COACHING & TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

This document outlines Galaxy Alliance Soccer Club's philosophy and plan for training and developing its players. It is prepared for coaches, but managers and parents should be aware of it and support our efforts to provide a consistent yet adaptable vision across all teams and coaches. These are guidelines and not rigid rules; each coach is encouraged to employ his/her own ideas and approach, and implement a training program that best suits the different technical and physical dynamics of individual players. Together we are focused on nurturing talent and accelerating learning.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

GASC strives to produce outstanding players and competitive teams that will advance within the Southern California soccer system. Achieving these goals requires commitment, focus, and desire from players, parents and coaches alike. At the same time, we want to help our players have balanced lives, develop self-esteem and confidence, avoid "burnout" and continue to play and love the sport of soccer as long as possible. Our coaches must find the balance between an intense and a lighter practice environment, which may vary depending upon the time of the soccer season, the age of the player, and the level and expectations of the team.

WHAT STYLE OF SOCCER DO WE TEACH?

GASC believes that it is important to have a shared vision and a desired style of play - an ethos that provides identity. We encourage our coaches to focus on the long-term goal of teaching a high-quality style of soccer that would be appealing to any soccer enthusiast. We are steadfast in teaching these basic tenants of quality soccer:

- Passing the ball on the ground and "to feet";
- Playing the ball "out of the back" (building an attack out of the defensive area of the team formation);
- Utilizing open space and movement "off the ball" to develop a quick, aggressive and dynamic passing game;
- Playing "possession with progression soccer" to develop patience and enable our teams to control the speed of a game;
- Playing an adaptable, balanced and well-rounded game, incorporating different styles and systems of play, alternate formations, the ability to rotate positions, etc.

As a club we encourage and endorse our teams to play a diverse and attacking brand of soccer. Players should use their creativity to take advantage of opportunities (1v1, 2v1, etc.) that present themselves without fear of failure.

We do not restrict each team to play with a specific formation or "shape", and leave the nuances of a team's tactical approach to the coaches.

TRAINING GUIDELINES BY PLAYER AGE

Our ideal multi-year curriculum teaches age-specific skills and concepts in a gradual, progressive manner, and requires strong focus and commitment from players, families and



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coaches alike. We aim to achieve a 360-degree approach to development via recurrent age-specific training:

Division / Age	Training Focus	Physical & Psychological Considerations
<p>(Pre-club) 4-7 Years</p>	<p>INTRODUCTORY STAGE - <u>Initial Technical Development:</u> Developing first touch and the ability to gain control over the ball. Familiarity through play, mostly small-sided games with basic explanations about space distribution. Allow each player to get as many “touches” on the ball as possible: most exercises will be individual (e.g. each player should have a ball). Practices should be based on fun games.</p>	<p>Limited concentration. High emphasis on practical demonstration and learning by doing. Easily distracted. Foster enjoyment of the game, balancing progress with fun and lots of encouragement. Minimal emphasis on winning. Help kids learn to love the game.</p>
<p>U09-U12 8-11 Years</p>	<p>BASIC STAGE - <u>Elevated Technical Development:</u> Training sessions focus on developing technique (ball handling skills, first touch, etc) and basic tactical understanding. Practices should focus on using both feet. Use 1v1 and 2v1 situations to develop individual skills and passing techniques. Utilize small-sided games for developing basic attacking and defensive principles. Rotate players through multiple positions whenever possible to develop more rounded skills and field awareness. Physical development focuses on speed, coordination, balance and agility.</p>	<p>Players have physical limitations in terms of strength and endurance. Build confidence: minimize emphasis on team’s win-loss record. Strive to balance playing time for all players as much as possible. Limit the number of tournaments and organized games played, but provide time for unstructured “free play” with minimal coaching to allow players to develop creativity, decision-making and self-reliance.</p>
<p>U13-U15 12-14 Years</p>	<p>REFINING STAGE - <u>Development of Insight:</u> Players at this age develop a good understanding of the game, executing more advanced techniques within a team framework. Tactical training plays an important role. Guided instruction through elements of a real match. Strength and endurance should be part of the fitness training. Players must develop self-discipline and respect at this stage. Encourage players to watch and study high-level pro Soccer (e.g., European Leagues) and become 'students of the game.'</p>	<p>Players are limited by their physical size and the significant changes that arise during this period of athletic maturation. Coach should be cautious to avoid overtraining, focusing more on tactical and technical elements of the game and less on the physical aspects.</p>
<p>U16-U19 15-18 Years</p>	<p>ADVANCED STAGE - <u>Maturing of Insight & Optimizing Performance</u> Interactive instruction by taking match performance as basis for coaching. Important aspects of the tactical training are speed of play, quick transition, counter</p>	<p>Players at this age have completed most of their physical and mental development. Players should acknowledge and focus on the importance of setting</p>



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	<p>attacking and finishing in the final third, as well as pressing. The physical aspect of the game is key at this stage: endurance, strength and speed should be part of the weekly training routine. Players learn to combine all elements and win games, while gaining a healthy appreciation of both team and individual success.</p>	<p>targets and reaching goals. Competition and team advancement come into focus. Playing time becomes less balanced and is earned through effort and performance.</p>
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RECOMMENDED ANNUAL TRAINING SCHEDULE

Period	Dates	Activity / Training Intensity
Pre-Season Training	Mid July to early Sep	Conditioning for 2-3 weeks, intensive camps for 1-2 weeks, then training sessions, scrimmages & one or two tournaments to prepare for league season. <u>Intensity: HIGH.</u> Increase intensity as league season approaches.
Fall League Season	Early Sep to early Dec	League games, regular training sessions,. Minimize outside activities <u>Intensity: HIGH.</u> But avoid over-training between games.
Holiday Break	Mid Dec to early Jan	No regular training sessions for 2-3 weeks. Individual ball skill work, clinics, some conditioning, and unstructured free play (small-sided games) is encouraged. <u>Intensity: LOW</u>
Winter Tournament Season	Early Jan to Mar	Some conditioning work after holidays, followed by regular training to prepare for State & National Cup. <u>Intensity: MED-HIGH.</u> Increase intensity as Cup season approaches.
Spring Training	Mar to mid-Jun	Regular training, Spring League, scrimmages, tournaments. Focus on player development, experimentation, rotating positions, trying out new players, testing lineups & configurations, etc. <u>Intensity: MODERATE</u>
Summer Break	Mid Jun to Mid Jul	Break from regular sessions. Encourage individual ball skill work, free play, small-sided games, cross-training with other sports, conditioning. <u>Intensity: MINIMAL</u>

Rationale For “Breaks” From Regular Training: Effective training needs to have a perceivable annual “cycle”; Players and coaches cannot maintain constant intensity throughout the year, and a perceived “break” from training is important to provide a conclusion to the cycle. This does not mean that players should stop all soccer activities (active recovery), but simply stop regular practices and games with their team and coach. Players should also be encouraged to take a “complete break” from soccer for a short period during their team breaks.

1. At the younger ages in particular, players need an occasional (annual) break from organized soccer training In order to give their bodies and minds a rest, invigorate their interest in the sport, and allow them to experience other forms of athletics and activities.
2. Players need breaks from coaching and structured play. They should have opportunities to enjoy playing the sport without judgment or pressure to perform.



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3. Players need a break from their coach, and coaches need a break from their players. After a period, players may not “hear” their coach anymore if they don’t have a break and/or hear a different “voice” (i.e., another coach) via camps, clinics or assistant coaches. We would strongly advise our players to only work with external coaches who meet the standards of GASC technical staff/coaches.

PLAYER EVALUATIONS

Frequency: Coaches should provide players with two formal evaluations per year:

1. **Fall**, around league season, to indicate what needs to be worked on for the balance of the year.
2. **Spring**, prior to summer break, to show players what they achieved or didn't achieve since the previous evaluation, or help them understand what they have to work on for the coming season and/or why the coach might be suggesting that they seek a more appropriate team for their skill or commitment level. Evaluations should typically not be scheduled during practices.

Format: Each player should receive a written evaluation (using the form provided by the GASC DOC). The coach should arrange a meeting with the player (and his parents, if they wish) to review and expand upon the written evaluation.

Content/approach: The coach should be encouraging when possible, but be direct and clear about the areas of focus for the player. Concise, achievable and specific suggestions for improvement are preferred over broad, general comments. The player should be left with a clear idea of what he needs to do in order to improve his performance, playing time, or keep his position on the team.

Evaluation Forms: The GASC Player Evaluation Form should be used, and can be obtained from the GASC DOC.

COACH ROTATION

GASC supports the idea of a team changing its coach periodically (e.g., every 2-3 years) for the following reasons:

1. Each coach brings a unique background, set of experiences and depth of insight to his players. At various points in a player’s career, he or she will benefit tremendously from exposure to what a new coach has to offer.
2. Players often need a different “voice” to motivate and invigorate them. It is difficult for one coach to continually find new ways to connect with players as they mature and develop.
3. Players’ personalities change as they grow, particularly as they go through adolescence. A coaching style and demeanor that was appropriate for younger players might not be as effective for teenagers, for instance.
4. As players enter the high school and possible college recruitment stage, players might benefit from switching to a coach with experience in the recruiting and matriculation process.
5. Coaches also need to be refreshed and invigorated, and a new team can provide a healthy motivating change.