

## **The Spartans FC Youth Player Pathway Guidance, Small Sided (Boys)**



### **OVERVIEW**

The Spartans FC Youth aims to develop players and coaches into “the best, people, players and coaches they can be.”

The emphasis is on producing young footballers who are proud to play for Spartans. Our aim to produce technically outstanding, innovative football players whilst also developing educating and supporting innovative coaches, who are excellent trainers in the game. To create coaches, players and squads who are recognised as excellent ambassadors and role models. To build a club culture of excellence, demanding 100% effort at all times. Winning is important but not at all costs. We have a Long-Term Player Development plan (LTPD) in place which is not result focussed.

One of the key objectives of the club is to ensure that members are encouraged to stay with the club and continue to play, train and, compete at their chosen level. We want to see players progressing through our ranks to the adult 1st team (and/or beyond).

### **THE BIGGER PICTURE**

- The youngest players need an opportunity to build their skills in a safe and supported environment.
- Structured coaching sessions will aid progress and ensure that fundamental skills are developed.
- An age group is successful when all players enjoy playing the game and all players are learning.
- Learning will take place in a positive environment and Ball Mastery is key.

### **CLUB VALUES**

At Spartans FC Youth we have a set of core values which lead and guide our behaviours and underpin the “Spartans Way” on and off the pitch. Coaches are the role models for children and parents and have a responsibility to project and promote the clubs core values in all that they do.

### **PLAYER PATHWAY**

At the Small Sided stage our squads generally have 40 players. As the squad progresses towards 11aside and U13s, the squads will generally increase their player numbers during the 9aside season at U12s in order to have enough players to create either 2 or 3 x 11aside squads. It is at the squads discretion how many 11aside squads they progress to U13s with.

## **SMALL SIDED TEAMS - OFFICIAL ROLES**

### **Head Coach**

- Ideally an experienced coach who has experience of the age group and who will keep communication flowing between the age group team coaches and provide support where required in conjunction with the CDO.
- Organise regular meetings with the age group team coaches, (at least twice a year), to discuss player development and movement between squads.
- Hold meetings/communicate regularly with squad parents/guardians to keep them up to date and gain parental buy-in.
- Establishing expectations at the beginning of the season and being honest about these will mean less opportunity for dissatisfied players and parents.
- This role can be combined with one of the other roles.

### **Team Lead Coaches:**

- Will be qualified to SFA Coaching Qualification Level 1.3 on the Children's pathway.
- Will take responsibility for a team within the age group and will coordinate their team's league matches, keeping other team coaches and parents informed.
- Will work with the squad Head Coach on all matters relating to the development of the players and squad and has input into all decisions for the squad.

### **Team Coaches:**

- At least one additional coach per squad who will be qualified to be SFA Coaching Level to a 1.2 on the Children's pathway.
- Will work with the squad Head Coach on all matters relating to the development of the players and squad and has input into all decisions for the squad.

### **Secretary:**

- Responsible for registering the team, officials, and players each season.
- Maintains an up to date record of all current squad players, including the completion of the SYFA Parental Consent, GDPR and Gift Aid form.
- Maintains an up to date record of coaches and volunteers including contact details.
- To act as the liaison between the club and team officials, players, and parents/guardians.

### **First Aiders:**

- There must be at least one Sports Injury qualified First Aider per team.
- The First Aider must be available to attend most squad training sessions and matches and is responsible for the maintenance of the squads First Aid bag.

### **Parent Helpers:**

- To support coaches as required at training and matches. Volunteers can provide a great support to the team carrying out tasks from admin to fundraising etc.

### **All Youth Section Volunteers are Committed to:**

- All squad volunteers to complete the Volunteer Recruitment Process.
- Abide by the Spartans Code of Conduct to guide behaviour.
- No squads shall disband without first consulting with the YSMC.
- No Players should be asked to leave the club due to football ability.
- The YSMC is available to give guidance and support in all matters.

## **ORGANISING PLAYERS INTO SQUADS FOR COACHING**

Guidelines for how we approach training at Spartans:

- Head Coach will organise a method after consultation with other coaches
- Ideally coaches will move round all squads and will not work with the same group all the time; this helps all coaches and players learn together and makes it easier to move players around squads. This also helps with the players development by working with different coaching styles and personalities

Experience in some age groups suggest that organising the groups as part of the daily register process works well and enables the coaches to plan for which player is in each group each week.

#### **4 aside & 5 aside – U8s & U9s**

How we organise players into Squads for Coaching:

- All players are mixed into random groups
- Groups can be kept for 2 weeks then split into new groups. This helps to build friendship & help gauge development
- This helps the coaches monitor the kids & see how best they can be supported
- Warmups & small games can still be mixed within the full group

At this age we are looking for:

- A positive attitude: Hard work, effort, teamwork, listening and concentration skills
- Regular attendance: Coming to training as often as possible

Match Day - Players need to play to develop:

- None of your players will improve if they don't get the opportunity to use their skills on match day.
- All teams/players will be in mixed ability groups at the Fun 4s & 5s.
- Spartans teams must have an equal playing time policy - regardless of the match situation. That can be a difficult position to defend when you start losing games you know you could have won.
- To make this policy succeed requires good communication with parents and sometimes, a thick skin.
- Parents need to remember that this isn't the World Cup and young players just need the opportunity to play football in a positive environment.
- Teams will comprise 4 outfield players in a diamond formation with no goalkeepers.
- Players should rotate into different positions in the diamond in each game.
- Team squads may consist of up to 6 players with rolling substitutions used throughout the match.
- Players who have been substituted may return to the field of play as often as necessary.
- MOST IMPORTANT - PLEASE LET THE PLAYERS PLAY & MAKE MISTAKES

We want to create an all-round football player. Whether he/she becomes a striker, defender, full back or midfield player, he/she must be able to accept the ball, pass it, dribble and make the correct decisions.

#### **7 aside & 9 aside – U10s, U11s, U12s**

How we organise players into Squads for Coaching:

- All players are still mixed together with the option to occasionally split and train with their own team
- This helps to build friendship & help gauge development
- This helps the coaches monitor the kids & see how best they can be supported
- Warmups & small games can still be mixed within the full group

At this age we are looking for:

<p><b>Speed/Agility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Running with the ball</li> <li>• Running without the ball</li> <li>• Changing direction</li> <li>• Reaction/Multi directions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Game Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the game</li> <li>• When to pass or not?</li> <li>• Support/switching play etc</li> <li>• When and where to run to</li> <li>• Checking the shoulder</li> </ul>
<p><b>Technical Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passing – both feet</li> <li>• Control – all parts of the body</li> <li>• Shooting – different variations</li> <li>• Ball mastery and moves to beat a player</li> </ul>	<p><b>Character</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect (for coaches, teammates, opposition, parents)</li> <li>• Bounce-back-ability</li> <li>• Leadership qualities</li> <li>• Willing to help</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning &amp; improving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting of positive coaching</li> <li>• Demonstrate desire and positive attitude</li> <li>• Willingness to practise/complete homework tasks</li> </ul>	

Match Day – Players need to play to develop:

ESSDA Soccer 7s has different divisions to allow players and teams to play at an appropriate level. These leagues are Pele (strongest), Iniesta, Maradona, Zidane and Beckham (least strong).

- In the first block of Soccer 7s splitting players into ability levels can be difficult
- Groupings should not be set in stone and players should move around and coaches should review players on a regular basis (ongoing development)
- A player does not learn anything in a game if he/she does not get any touches of a ball
- Spartans teams must have an equal playing time policy - all players play for a similar length of time on match day, regardless of the match situation. That can be a difficult position to defend when you start losing games you know you could have won
- To make this policy succeed requires good communication with parents and sometimes, a thick skin
- Parents need to remember that this is not the World Cup and young players just need the opportunity to play football in a positive environment.
- For 7 aside teams consist of 1 goalkeeper and 6 outfield players with a squad of 9 players attending a match.
- For 9 aside teams consist of 1 goalkeeper and 8 outfield players with a squad of 14 players attending a match is ideal

- Rolling substitutions are used throughout the match. Players who have been substituted may return to the field of play as often as necessary
- It is best to plan to ensure that substitutions are fair but be prepared to be flexible
- Through planning encourage players to play in more than one position during a match
- Winning is not the main objective of the games for Spartans
- MOST IMPORTANT - PLEASE LET THE PLAYERS PLAY & MAKE MISTAKES

### **Additional Coaching Topics**

At a young age, size, height, and strength will not be a significant factor. Being stronger and bigger now does not mean a player will be the best in 5 years' time. Players mature and develop at different times so please look at all players D.O.B for a guide.

#### Attendance at training and matches

- Players need to attend training and matches to learn. However, remember players should be doing other sports too as this aids development.
- Coaches will set the expectation that a 75% attendance rate is the target.
- Each age group will maintain a register to ensure that player attendance rates are recorded.
- If attendance drops please discuss with Parent or Guardian.

#### Rotation - Building a complete footballer

- Whether a striker, defender, full-back or midfielder, he/she must be able to accept the ball, pass it, dribble and make the correct decisions
- Players need opportunities to play in different area of pitch (Defender, Striker, Left and Right).
- Rotating should occur regularly

#### Behaviour – Adherence to Code of Conduct

- We expect the players to demonstrate respect and to try their best at training and matches

#### Addressing Misbehaviour

- Tell player what is expected and why – If they continue to misbehave, get them to sit out in the 'Sin Bin' for a few minutes (remember to explain why)
- Bring them back in to the game and if they misbehave again, get them to sit out again (explain why).
- If the behaviour is significant, advise the parent – most parents want to know!

#### Support available for Coaches

- Guidance and advice from the Coach Development Officer (CDO)
- Spartans Curriculum – available on website and in electronic format
- Spartans Toolbox, (Homework & Player Assessment Booklet supplied)
- Spartans Youth will fund attendance at SFA coaching courses.

### **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

The challenge for Spartans FC Youth is to create an environment where players can learn and develop to their full potential and parents/guardians play a key role in this.

#### Regular Attendance

All players should attend training regularly if they want to be part of Spartans Youth. The minimum target for attendance is 75% across all sessions. If Players are attending Additional Development Squads attendance to standard sessions is expected.

#### Encourage Your Child to Talk to Coaches

If they are having difficulties, need help or have questions encourage them to speak directly to the coaches. Taking responsibility is part of developing as a player.

#### Be your Child's Best Fan

Give your child unconditional support, irrespective of performance. Encourage them, be supportive, cheer appropriately.

#### Do not Coach from the Side lines

Even as coaches, during matches we will try not to coach to much as the players must learn to make decision for themselves and not just follow instructions: So, please don't:

- Tell them when to pass, shoot, tackle, track back, get into position, mark, or anything similar. Our emphasis is on 1v1 skills and ball mastery, allowing the kids to develop confidence on the ball. We would rather they dribbled a lot rather than pass.
- Tell them where to be on the pitch. We will put them into a diamond at the start, but then leave them to it. If the "defender" doesn't defend, so be it. We will ask them between games what they might have done differently, but that's it.

#### Equal Playing Time

We give equal playing time for every player, regardless of ability and a match situation. We'll lose games that we could have won if we'd played the strongest kids – but winning isn't the aim at this age, it is all about development of the whole team.

#### Keep a Check on Reality

If the team has lost but have tried their best, help your child see this as a "win". The focus should be on progress and not results.

#### Play an Active Role

There are lots of small tasks that need done to run a successful age group, e.g. taking the register, writing newsletters, fundraising, team building etc. Talk to the Head Coach to volunteer – it is fun to get involved and help with the age group or in the wider club.

#### Pay Subs on Time

Spartans FC Youth budget carefully but relies on player subs to function effectively. Your subs pay for basic equipment, match strips, pitch bookings and supporting infrastructure.

#### Additional Funding

If you are lucky enough to have work for or run a successful business, please consider sponsoring a squad. A donation can help fund an age group to have additional kit, footballs, equipment etc. Ask for Sponsorship details.

#### Parents Code of Conduct

Please download a copy from the website and read it. Please respect the officials and the opposition and abide by the Code of Conduct. **Please do not coach from the side lines - leave that to the coaches.**

#### Queries

Queries about playing, squads and opportunities to develop should be dealt with by the squad Head Coach in the first instance and if not resolved can then be referred to the Coach Development Officer and YSMC if necessary.

For further information see our website at: <http://spartansfcyouth.com/>