

Overview: Young Players Ages 12 to 14

Examining the characteristics of a young player

By Dirk Diekmann for Success in Soccer magazine.

Training

Boys and girls at this age ...

- "shoot up" in height when they enter puberty. This rapid growth creates an imbalance between the length of their torso and legs;
- often find it difficult to move around in a fluid manner because of the physical changes they are experiencing
- on the other hand demonstrate greatly improved strength and speed.

Consequences:

- The basic technical principles need to be adapted to this greater swiftness.
 - Their ability to grasp concepts means: they can be taught more demanding tactics.
 - Fitness and stamina are improved, primarily through playing. Training should occasionally be supplemented by simple circuits, jumping exercises, games and exercises to improve reaction and acceleration.
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Playing

Boys and girls at this age ...

- playing in a competitive team, i.e. in a group which shares the same objectives, norms and interests, find the "security" which they lack or consciously reject in other areas of their lives at this time. Psychological insecurity is stabilized merely by belonging to a team;
- can also perform more specific tasks within the team because they have a better grasp of the game.

Consequences

- The recognition by teammates and coaches of the importance of individuals' performance in the team's success helps to boost young players' self-confidence. Each player must be given tasks geared towards his particular strengths without limiting individual initiative, creativity and enjoyment of the game.
 - Main emphasis during games on the use of space and the careful build-up of play.
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Care

Boys and girls at this age ...

- distance themselves further from adults, looking to establish their own fixed place in the world;
- are often prone to considerable mood swings and inconsistency in their performance during this orientation phase;
- receive support from their friends and peers during this somewhat insecure process of "finding themselves."

Consequences

- Players at this age must be shown how to be independent and share responsibility.
- However, coaches must not issue all the orders, plan and organize everything, block out criticism. Instead, their main job is to encourage the youngsters to find their own solutions and develop their own ideas.
- Each player must be allocated suitable responsibilities.